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THE OLD YEAR IS DYING.

By B. Mansfield.

Voices floating on the air,
Echoes upward flying,
Ring around with mournful sound,
The Old Year is dying.

Moaning comes the whistling wind,
Its low voice replying,
As each breeze sweeps through the trees,
The Old Year is dying.

Fitful gusts sweep wailing by,
Ever, ever sighing;
As they fly comes this reply,
The Old Year is dying.

Downy snow-flakes through the air,
Down to earth now flying,
From the cloud, form a white shroud
For the Old Year, dying.

Time with its resistless wing
Onward ever bieing,
Bringing near the closing year—
Near, the Old Year, dying.

Vanishing like spring-time snow,
Like a shadow flying,
Brings the hour, the last sad hour
Of the Old Year—dying.

* * *

THE JEWELLER;

OR,

THE NECKLACE OF DIAMONDS.

A CITY lounger, whether an inhabitant of New York or London, becomes familiar with strange mutations of fortune. New faces, new enterprise, new stores, greet his daily observation. After awhile the old site puts on a new face, hangs out a new sign. The former occupant and his business disappear. No one knows whither—few care, least of all the idle loiterer seeking amusement in the changing diversity of the streets. Sometimes an old face reappears after a lapse of years; of such an event we have a strange story to tell.

Many years since we were acquainted with a young man who opened a jeweller's shop, in Bond street, London. His name, for obvious reasons, we conceal, but he shall be known to our readers as Charles Stanwood. In personal accomplishments and family connections he was superior to the generality of the class who follow mechanical professions. Reverse of fortune caused young Stanwood to be apprenticed to a jeweller; he became, in the course of time, an experienced judge and skilful setter of precious stones; and with promise of support from a numerous circle of acquaintance, opened—perhaps prematurely, for his capital was of trifling amount—a shop, (or as we would call it this side of the Atlantic, a store,) in the leading thoroughfare of fashion.

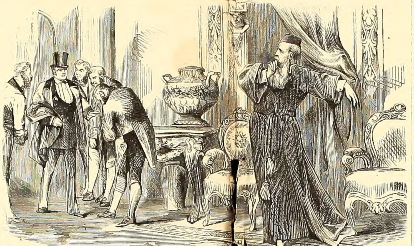
Business throve. The shop became a favorite resort of ladies, who possibly might have been influenced by the handsome person and captivating manners of the young jeweller. Although Stanwood's capital was small,—stock, therefore, necessarily scanty—yet, through connection with his deceased father's mercantile friends, he was occasionally entrusted with diamonds, and other precious articles, to sell on commission, and so was enabled to compete, in point of attractive display, with his most substantial and wealthy rivals in trade.

It is not every time a lady enters a shop that she makes, or intends making a purchase; often she resorts to the rich bazaars, and marts of fashion, for sake of spending, not money, but time. Our own lounging experience afforded ocular demonstration of the practice; but in the case of young Stanwood we thought it carried to an inconvenient excess; oft rallied him on entertaining, so urbanely, his unprofitable visitors, and hinted the mutual attractiveness of flirtation. By his replies, we found our acquaintance had not lost sight of business, even in his polite and gallant devotions; the well-appointed equipages which stood at the door—though time were lost with the fair owners—proved a ready and efficacious mode of advertising, fully compensating for absence of purchasers. We placed more faith in his declaration, as we knew he was attached to a young lady, by whom the affection was returned; though it would have put her inexperienced feelings to a severe trial if she had seen what we were daily witnesses of—the specious, courtly, insinuating attentions of the handsome jeweller to the youth and beauty who crowded his establishment.

One day there alighted, from a dashing equipage, two ladies whom Stanwood recognized—one as a peeress, her companion, the wife of a rich commoner.

After minute inspection of many articles, which often caused him to leave the fair customers, in quest of jewelry in a different part of the shop, they departed without making any purchase, and were ushered to the carriage by the obsequious jeweller. There was nothing extraordinary or unusual in such a proceeding; but in replacing in proper safety, one of the trays, he missed a necklace of diamonds, of exceedingly great value, but which his visitors had not, apparently, particularly scrutinized. The necklace belonged to a merchant, to whom it had been consigned from Russia, and who, being a personal friend, and having a high opinion of Stanwood's integrity, deemed his attractive and fashionable shop the best mart for the sale of such an article. It was, therefore, placed in his charge to find a purchaser.

Breathless with emotion at the sudden loss, the jeweller stood leaning against the counter, endeavoring to recall minutely every circumstance of the visit. There was—there could be no mistake! He had seen the necklace when displaying the tray; he missed it on returning from the carriage. Although he happened to be alone, without any assistant, it were impossible any depredator could



have seized the opportunity of his back being turned for a moment as he had taken the precaution, ere handing the ladies to the carriage, of locking the trays temporarily, under one of the glass cases, and retaining the key. The glass was unbroken, and the bolt of the lock was duly shut, when he returned.

What should he do? Put up with the loss was out of the question. The necklace was worth more than all he possessed—the profits of business (beyond personal and necessary expenditure) he had disbursed in attractive but unsubstantial display, relying on the future for ample return. The high rank of the parties placed them above suspicion—Their noted wealth removed ordinary motives of temptation. His daring insolence and presumption, it would be termed, should he venture an accusation, must entail, in all but his own eyes, well-merited retaliation, and certain ruin to his business. If his first step were to seek the ladies, they would, he judged, deny the appropriation, (perhaps, indeed, one only was guilty,) and time would be afforded for effectually concealing or destroying the property. He deemed it more advisable to seek a private interview with the peer, lay open the state of affairs, and by promising secrecy, the matter might doubtless be arranged without a loss.

It was a task requiring more than ordinary courage, even to state his case, but character, property, credit—all that was valuable—were at stake; nerving resolution to a pitch of daring, he knocked at the door of his lordship's gloomy, but capacious mansion. On being ushered into the library, the peer—who perceived his embarrassment—by kindliness of tone, and the urbanity peculiar to high station, succeeded in some measure, in putting him at ease.

After stammering awhile, the jeweller delivered the strange tale, which the nobleman heard with such composure, that the other began to believe his lordship was aware of his wife's propensities, and that the untoward affair would, for himself, have happier termination than his fears at first suggested. But this belief was illusory. A strong, burning indignation was suppressed under outward calmness of demeanor. Soon as Stanwood had concluded, the peer rang the bell, and on a servant's entrance, inquired if her ladyship had come home. He was answered in the affirmative. Bidding the man wait, his lordship wrote a hasty note to the magistrate of a neighboring police-office, which he was ordered to deliver immediately, without further communication with any party.

"I would have you, sir, take notice," said the nobleman, leaving the door of the library open as the man lingered a moment in the hall, "that my messenger has had speech with no one in the house—it may be important to the justice of your case!"

The valet shortly returned, accompanied by a police-officer. Soon as the latter appeared, the owner of the mansion commanded the outer door to be locked, and the keys to be given to the functionary.

"Now, restate your charge in the presence of the officer," said the peer, addressing Charles Stanwood.

The jeweller, whose thoughts began to take an unpleasant turn at the probable consequences of a charge he might fail to substantiate, repeated the history of the transaction. When he had concluded, the nobleman, addressing the officer, recapitulated the leading points, and requested that he would instantly commence a search through the house, in presence of Mr. Stanwood and himself, as right—or he himself should not be satisfied, and certainly the accuser would not be more contented—as though he were in the domicile of a reputed thief. He begged, also, the officer and the accuser both to bear witness that up to the present moment, her ladyship was ignorant of the charge. We need not repeat the details of this domiciliary inquiry—suffice it to say, the jeweller himself, both openly and to his own conscience, was forced to confess that all had been done which the strongest suspicion warranted. The necklace was not found.

"We will now, if you please," said the peer, casting a keen glance at the disco[illegible] jeweller, "pay a visit to my friend. His w[illegible] as deeply implicated as her ladyship—though [illegible] have no control over his proceedings."

The commoner, who lived [illegible] happened to be at home when the [illegible]itors arrived. In his presence, St[illegible] to repeat once more the perplexing [illegible] gentleman betrayed considerable [illegible] during the recital, and was, with [illegible]ty persuaded by his friend to wait the co[illegible]n.

"You hear what Mr. Stanwoo[illegible]s," said the nobleman, addressing his frien[illegible] me tell you what I have done."

When he had informed him of [illegible]ature and extent of the search which his ho[illegible] had undergone, he added, "I do not presume [illegible] dictate what should be your conduct."

"My house shall undergo the [illegible] scrutiny," cried the commoner.

Search commenced, was carried [illegible] and concluded as unsatisfactory—to Stanwood [illegible] in the previous instance.

"Can you aid Mr. Stanwood further in the recovery of his property—so far as [illegible] or our families are concerned?" asked the nobleman.

The officer replied, that he had never, during his experience, made a more rigorous search—and, as it had been done promptly and unexpectedly, as he could assure Mr. Stanwood that so far as the two gentlemen and their families were concerned, there was nothing further that could be done—and, were they even of a disreputable character, nothing more could he attempt or ad[illegible]

"Have *you*, sir, now done with us?" cried the peer, addressing the jeweller, sternly, yet quietly.

Charles, distracted with his loss, stunned by the unavailing result of the search which seemed to foreclose hope of recovering the necklace, and foreshadowing approaching ruin, replied, that he had no other remark to offer, or course to pursue, than repeat what he had asserted in the morning—begging pardon of his lordship and f[illegible] for the nature of the unpleasant revelation, which his own conscience and justice to his creditors, demanded, should not be stifled.

"Well, sir," continued the peer, "your further proceedings are of no moment to us. Whether we have done with you is a material question, which I shall take the advice of friends [illegible] ere I decide. If you ever did, or do now, entertain an opinion, that through fear of this disgraceful charge being made public, we—or I will speak only for myself—*I* should be induced to purchase your silence, banish the thought! Take the [illegible]ure of action which the law allows to suspicion, and let this officer be witness that I afford every facility."

The commoner said that his lordship's intentions coincided with his own.

There was something so oppressive to a clear conscience in the quiet, dignified hauteur of the two friends, that the spirit of the young man was aroused, and though he beheld ruin in every shape, and on every side, staring him in the face, he plucked up courage to say that, in the present state of the affair, advice might prove of benefit to all parties—with that view, he would himself seek it; and, meanwhile, he was as firm in his charge as they were in submitting themselves to the proof. Here ended the colloquy.

In returning home, chafed and distressed, Charles could not dismiss from his mind the thought he ought immediately to acquaint the owner of the necklace of the loss, yet he could not summon courage—he clung to the hope that something might turn up to guide him out of the perplexing labyrinth. He went straight to his lawyer. The solicitor shook his head—it was a bad case! The parties were of such high rank, undoubted wealth, so liberal in their household expenditure, that the ladies would appear, according to all ordinary judgment, to have no temptation. There was perhaps a mistake—at least the world would say so. As his suspicions were so strong, he should have followed the carriage or have seen the ladies in the first instance. Without giving any opinion on the guilt or innocence of the accused, his client would have had more power over female fears, and doubtless, have reaped more advantage, than by running tilt against the virtuous indignation of the husband.

"[illegible] man whom ruin frowns on may be excused [illegible] confusion in his actions," said Stanwood, rather sharply; "I consult you for the benefit of your skill in my future course, not that you should read me a lecture on what I have done. A prophet of the past is not entitled to much honor!"

The lawyer, with a smile at the excusable anger of his client, declared he should not suffer from want of advice—but he viewed the case as nigh hopeless. As his own testimony was entirely unsupported by other evidence, it was useless to commence proceedings against the nobleman or his friend; they had already done voluntarily, as much, or more, than the law could have enforced. As for making it a jury case, it was impracticable for want of witnesses, and even if this difficulty were removed, sympathy would be strongly in favor of the defendants, from the manner in which they met the charge. The property must be somewhere. And all that he could do, was to make the police acquainted with the robbery, (of that, by-the-by, they already knew something,) but with the exact description of the necklace, the facial cutting and weight of the precious stones, mode of setting and other particulars. An accurate description should also be distributed among the trade, to which might be added the offer of a competent reward for the recovery of the property, on an apprehension of any party on whom it should be found. With respect to the owner's claim, that was a matter of debtor and creditor, which would be arranged better by appeal to the party's feelings, than by a solicitor's interference. As Stanwood was, by bond, answerable for the return of the jewels, or their value, he could not escape from the penalty. As to the threatened legal proceedings of the peer, and his untitled friend, he had not much to fear; though indirectly, in respect to his business connection, their hostility might prove extremely hurtful.

The solicitor's advice, as far as practicable, was adopted, and Stanwood passed a miserable, restless night. Next morning, on looking over the public journals, he found a tolerably distinct representation of the affair, though filled out with blanks, asterisks and innuendoes, in lieu of streets and names. He who had prided himself on the array of handsome equipages, blocking the wayside in front of his door, was doomed to loiter through the morning without a call, without a customer. The afternoon prints repeated the morning version, with additions descriptive of the magnanimous forbearance of the high-spirited nobleman, etc., with a tribute of consolation to the injured dames, concluding with advice to the ladies in selecting their tradesman.

Dinner and afternoon paper discussed—alike indigestible—Stanwood was relieved from the solitary monotony of the morning by a visitor. It was the owner of the necklace, who, having heard the reports which the papers circulated, came with anxious face, to ascertain whether the story referred to Charles Stanwood. It was but too true, as the jeweller, with rueful visage, admitted!

"This happened yesterday morning," exclaimed the merchant, in extreme anger; "and every one is to be informed of the loss—if you call it such—but myself! what construction am I to put upon such behavior?"

Stanwood answered, though not with clearness, that no unfavorable construction could be justly applied—a man's honesty were not less, if his courage were not always equal to the emergency.

The merchant, without commenting on this reply, inquired if he had not been at certain rooms, (which he named) on last Monday night, after play-house hours.

Charles admitted that he was present.

"Did you know," inquired the creditor, "the name and character of the tall man, with dark whiskers and black cane with jewelled top, whom you appeared so familiar with on that night?"

The startled jeweller replied in the negative—he was a total stranger—had never seen him before—knew not his name.

"Then I do," exclaimed the merchant; "he is a noted gambler. Is it fair to ask whether you often frequent those rooms?"

Poor Charles began to believe that all powers, human and transcendental, were leagued against him. With quiet and correct habits, such as would have commanded respect from the most rigid business man, or moralist, he had been induced on that evening—having heard frequently of the rooms—to venture on a glance by way of curiosity, after leaving the theatre, in order that he might not appear quite ignorant of life among his acquaintance. When there, probably a new face attracted the gambler's attention, whom he certainly knew not, nor had met there or elsewhere, before; as he now solemnly assured the merchant.

The proprietor of the necklace replied, coldly, that he was glad to hear it; a party known to both, a young man with more money than prudence, had seen him there on the occasion; and, knowing Stanwood's responsible connection with the merchant, had wit enough to set his friend on his guard.

From examination of the jeweller's books and stock, it appeared that he was far from being able, if everything were sold, to pay in full, all demands, including the limit price put on the necklace. But as he offered to make immediate inventory of effects, and showed every disposition to act honorably, the merchant was much softened, and went away with the declaration that he would allow fair time for the discovery of the property ere he pressed his claim; and that an additional reward, on his behalf, should be advertised.

There were yet two parties whom he was most anxious, yet dreaded, to encounter. This was the lady to whom he was attached, and her father. Mr. Benson was a retired merchant, and had higher notions of his daughter's future position than as a wedded partner of a shopkeeper. He was, therefore, extremely averse to the match, although he could not object to Stanwood, either in respect to deficiency of personal accomplishments or morals, nor yet on the score of means; as the business of the jeweller, though comparatively in embryo, promised to realize its owner a handsome fortune. Clara Benson was nineteen—in two years more would be of age; and, as her father feared, if he interposed decided obstacles to a union, would, on attaining her majority, exercise its privilege, as guardian of her own happiness. The jeweller, as we have intimated, was of respectable family, his father having been a merchant of repute. It was at the house of a mutual acquaintance—no other than the proprietor or consignee, of the lost necklace—that the lovers first met; the father, therefore, had no plea of reproach against the daughter, from the way in which they became acquainted. So he thought fit, on reviewing all the circumstances, more especially that the time would arrive when his consent or denial would be required, and the swain's increasing income, rendered application to his purse unnecessary, to yield at discretion, and the addresses of Stanwood were permitted.

The first hint of a storm in that quarter occurred in the evening, when Charles summoning courage, ventured a visit to the house of his expected father-in-law. He was informed, at the door, that both Mr. and Miss Benson were "not at home," which, from circumstances, he disbelieved, and construed into a denial. His strong hopes had ever been built on the depth of Clara's affection; on that rock he now relied, and resolved to seek an interview—and, if necessary, explain—at an early hour in the morning.

By putting in practice this resolution, he, in fact, stole a march on Mr. Benson, who was surprised, on returning home from a morning walk, to learn that Mr. Stanwood was in the drawing-room with his daughter. Thither the retired merchant stole, deeming it no breach of decorum—under peculiar circumstances—to listen in the back drawing-room to what was uttered in the front. He heard, from the lover, sighs, protestations, vows of unalterable affection, mixed with complaints of cruel fortune. These were in response to the cruel interdict which her father had placed against future intercourse. A week ago, Mr. Benson's injunction would have been laughed at by the jeweller, and disregarded by his daughter. But times were changed, and Stanwood, who had no home to offer, felt the change bitterly, yet he struggled against his hard lot.

"It rests with yourself, Miss Benson," exclaimed Charles, in agony, "whether I am to be treated as a criminal—I have had property stolen from my possession, and every one turns from me as though I were the thief. Let me but meet with pity in one dear bosom, and I will bear misfortune bravely; proudly!"

The low voice of Clara was heard murmuring a disclaimer of accusation. Her father, she said, had not asked her to give up her attachment—he would find he had no power to extort such a surrender—but she had promised—what she could not refuse an old parent—that, as there were rumors affecting Mr. Stanwood's character, (which she had no faith in,) as well as a certainty of his complete ruin, she would postpone further intimacy for the space of one twelvemonth, to allow interval for the truth to appear.

"And what were these rumors affecting his character?" demanded young Stanwood, with eagerness.

"Let me answer that question," cried Benson, throwing open the folding doors.

Charles could not deny having held conversation with a professed gambler, in a disreputable locality; though in vain urging the excuse, that he had been led there for the first and only time, having often been jeered for his ignorance, even by young men of high standing and character.

His excuse might be certainly fair, as Mr. Benson admitted, yet appearance with such company stood in very disagreeable opposition with the mys terious disappearance of the diamonds! He was also forced to confess insolvency, if the jewels were not forthcoming, and whether recovered or not, his business in Bond street—as one but slightly acquainted with the peculiarities of a West end connection must be aware of—was totally ruined. Had he even staunch friends, he would be unable to bear up against the influence of the deeply insulted ladies, whose wide aristocratic circle would make common cause with them.

Against these arguments and insinuations, Charles had nothing to oppose; so far as they militated against his union with Clara. He felt himself totally in the old man's power; he had no home to offer the lady, were she disposed to accept his suit; he had only his own conscientious integrity to rely on, and that availed naught in the way of providing maintenance for a wife. The postponement of intercourse for one year was, he judged, a manœuvre to deceive Clara, the real intention being to break off the match altogether. Like a general, who has made the best fight circumstances admit of, and who retreats slowly, and with regret, before a superior force, so Stanwood was forced to accept the conditions, and take a year's farewell of Clara.

At home the jeweller had leisure to reflect on the occurrences of the last three days. He felt thoroughly beaten. He had often read how hard it was to climb—how easy to fall; yet in his own history, he had exceeded romantic fiction. From comparative affluence to poverty, he slid down, as though along an inclined plane, and every one gave him a kick as he passed. The world in its infinite wisdom had condescended to read him a great moral lesson—yet he knew not how to profit by it, for he could neither see the crime he had committed, nor was he prepared to act otherwise than he had done, if the same circumstances—for which he suffered—were repeated.

Time was fruitful in events. The necklace could not be heard of. His once crowded shop was shunned—the principal creditors grew pressing, as his effects, through lack of business, were undergoing a process of gradual dissipation, instead of increase. He committed a voluntary act of bankruptcy—obtained, in due course, his discharge, left the court with the bankrupt's allowance-money, clothes and gold watch. The world was all before him, and before he renewed a general acquaintance with it, love prompted an inquiry after the Bensons. On passing final examination, and receiving his certificate, the commissioner complimented the bankrupt on the accuracy of his books and faithful account of stock. Elated with the praise, hope whispered he might regain influence with Mr. Benson, perhaps be put in a way to begin business under happier auspices. This hope perished miserably. The harsh, unfeeling old man had carried off his daughter to the East Indies, under pretence of realizing long neglected property, but—as Charles knew too well—to escape the alliance.

What bitter thoughts succeeded this news! His character was unimpeached—his creditors pitied his fate! Had but his friends (and who should have been more eager than his intended father-in-law?) rallied around him in the hour of difficulty—he might have transferred his business to the city, or some quarter beyond the influence of his aristocratic enemies, and flourish anew!

He felt sick—became the victim of a long, cruel fever, and when he slowly awoke to recovery, found himself penniless, deserted and forgotten. His name had passed away from the street where he once dwelt—another name occupied its place—wares of another description ornamented the windows. To look at Bond street, with his melancholy gaze, it seemed as though what had been was nothing but a dream. His eye glanced on his apparel—there was a change there—and he hurried away to conceal his poverty.

After awhile, Stanwood sought and obtained employment as a journeyman, in the service of a jeweller in the city. We use the word "city" as it is ordinarily used in London, to distinguish the mercantile quarter of the West End, or court and aristocratic part of the metropolis. Some years passed over his head whilst gaining a mere livelihood by skill in repairing jewelry and setting stones. Use is second nature, and Charles became in some degree reconciled—if not contented—with his humble situation. In the city, he was removed from casual contact either with former customers or rivals in trade—was known merely as the artisan who had—to use the common expression—seen better days, and was appreciated by his employer, as an excellent workman.

Memory of former station held him solitary in his amusements. He would not consort with members of his class—was found, when holy and leisure days permitted (he worked at home, as it is technically called by the piece, not pay work) to stroll by himself into the country. Though abandoned by former equals—without relish for society of a lower grade, nature had not lost her charms. Though even hope had fled—that kindly inspiration which dwells in the ruined tenement when every other glorious guest has departed—yet he felt a melancholy pleasure in the woods, and by the silent stream; elsewhere he was frowned on by the aristocratic spirit of man; in solitude, which was not solitude to him, he experienced in the glorious sunlight, and beneath the chequered shade of the grove, a buoyant up-spring of mind, which was at times more than consolation—a positive delight.

Fed by such high thoughts and aspirations, he was sustained in poverty, without falling into the habits and associations which poverty breeds. It chanced on one occasion, that in loitering through a lane, a few miles from the metropolis, he leaned over a paddock fence, attracted by the beauty of the verdure. A carriage drove by, and turning his head, he beheld a face changed, though not unforgotten. He could not be mistaken—it must be Clara Benson! The carriage was very fortunately detained at the entrance of the paddock a sufficient time to allow Stanwood to confirm his conjecture of the lady's identity; yet the aged gentleman at her side was not her father. Perhaps he was her husband—some old, wealthy nabob whom an unfeeling parent had forced on her choice. The thought conveyed a bitter pang, which he would gladly have deemed himself insensible of, at such lapse of time. Both occupants of the carriage stared at the lingering intruder—but it was the idle glance cast on a stranger. The gate was opened and the equipage passed on.

This unexpected meeting was food for bitter thought for many a day. Oft memory recurred in his lone walk to the close-shaven paddock, the equipage which bore her who was once the star of his affections. Often was he prompted to pay a second visit to the spot; but reason sternly asked to what purpose, but to embitter his peace? If Clara had left the protection of her father, it was exchanged only for the guardianship of a husband. No, there are incidents in some men's lives, which they do well to tear from memory.

As the most efficient and skilful workman, Stanwood was one morning sent for, to receive some instructions to reset some jewelry. His employer informed him that he had gained a new customer, a lady of fashion and distinction, and as it was not usual for people of quality to resort to city tradesmen, he was anxious to show her ladyship that the work entrusted to his care, could be as well executed as in Bond street or St. James. An old-fashioned diamond necklace was to be changed into ear-rings and bracelets, after a particular pattern produced. The jeweller told his workman that he had full confidence in his honesty, yet the stones being of great value, he should require him to bring his work every evening, to be placed in the vault, to prevent chance of loss by fire, robbery or other casualty—indeed, in the case of any other artificer than Stanwood, he would have the work performed under his own personal inspection. Perhaps the confidence reposed was not so great, as gems of great value are not easily disposable by workmen, and would be stopped by pawnbrokers and money-lenders on suspicion.

A draft of the pattern was placed in Stanwood's hands, together with the jewel-case, which he opened to inspect the contents.

"Are you sick?" cried the employer, seeing the workman tremble and turn pale.

Charles made excuse, pleading sudden giddiness, and promising to bring the precious articles in the evening—and every evening until it was completed—half an hour before the shop closed, he departed. The necklace was the same he had lost! Her ladyship—the lady of fashion and distinction he made no doubt was his old customer; her coming to the city in quest of a jeweller confirmed suspicion. Among new workmen, new tradesmen, who worked for a different class of customers, she doubtless felt certain of evading detection; and, as some years had passed, the diamonds, remodelled into fresh ornaments, and reset, would surely escape recognition. He felt inclined to return to his employer and obtain the name of the lady, but after doubt and hesitation, thought it advisable not to raise a suspicion. He remembered previous castigation, and resolved to act with caution, and make what he was entitled to—the most of his position.

Changing his ordinary daily dress, for apparel of a better description, he proceeded westward with the necklace in his pocket. With some difficulty he gained admission to the house without stating the object of his visit; and paying no heed to the quartette of liveried servants who ushered him in with obsequious bows, he boldly entered the princely apartment where the old nobleman was reclining in his trailing dressing-gown and slippers. The later, rose at the entrance of his visitor, and started perceptibly as he gazed on the half-remembered face before him. But he was calm again in an instant, and without a word he held aside the voluminous curtains from the doorway that opened into the library.

SEE ENGRAVING.

Charles permitted himself to be ushered into the well-remembered library, associated in his memory with every thought and feeling which the former interview gave birth to; it looked the same as though he had seen it but yesterday. Yet how changed was he!

The noble owner was slightly altered—time had not stood still—six summers had left their impress. Motioning his visitor to take a chair, he awaited in silence his communication, with an expression of face which seemed to imply expectation of claim for relief, or charitable donation.

"My lord! Do you not recognize me!" said Charles, without accepting the proffered seat.

The peer, rather impatiently, intimated ignorance of his person.

Poverty and suffering had no doubt done their work, as Stanwood confessed, yet he was the same party who had complained to his lordship, six years since, of the loss of a diamond necklace.

The peer said he remembered the circumstance well; the person of the jeweller was indeed altered. If he came to express contrition, he for his part, could afford to pardon the slander, especially as the crime had brought its own punishment.

"I have come, my lord," said Charles, sternly, "to save the criminal from punishment."

"How sir, what mean you?" asked the peer.

Stanwood related exactly how the necklace had fallen again into his possession. The nobleman changed color—stammered—begged to have the necklace in his possession five minutes, that he might take it upstairs, and resolve the horrid doubts which his story had raised.

Stanwood declared it should not go out of his hands, save into the hands of a magistrate.

"Wait awhile," cried the nobleman, hurriedly as he rushed from the room.

In a quarter of an hour he returned, pale in the face, and with disturbed eye, and seating himself near Stanwood, said he understood him to say that he had not testified recognition of the necklace in presence of his employer or any one else; the secret was in his own breast.

Charles replied, that what he had stated was the fact; he had acted more tenderly than he had been acted by.

"At what amount of money, said the peer, tapping the elbow of the chair, as though his fingers were playing the keys of a piano, "do you estimate the loss of your character, station, time?"

Stanwood burst into tears. He had lost everything, he said what money could never replace or restore—the friends of his youth—the idolized being to whom he was betrothed—and if he thought of less important objects, a business which, in a few years, would have realized a fortune.

The nobleman dashed aside a tear as he turned to his writing-desk. He wrote an order on his banker for ten thousand pounds, and handed it to Charles. There were not, he said, now sufficient assets, but two days hence the order would be duly honored. If he deemed that sum sufficient, all he required in return was, that he should complete his task for his city employers and bury the secret forever. His restoration to competence might be easily ascribed to other sources than the right one. Charles complied with the conditions, and left the house a changed and happier man.

Two months saw Stanwood once more himself—in handsome lodgings, with a showy nag, fingers cleansed and purified from stains and marks of tool edges, and possessor of ten thousand pounds. In such good trim, he must needs satisfy a longing to visit the neighborhood of the paddock which he had seen Clara enter, accompanied by her aged companion. By inquiries, he learned that the secluded mansion, hidden by plantations from the public road, was occupied by an old gentleman and his niece from the East Indies, and reputed immensely rich. They were now at a fashionable bathing place on the coast. To this resort Charles Stanwood hastened full of hope and expectation that the lady was still her own mistress. He contrived to meet and ride slowly past her carriage to determine if he were recognized. She started as though struck with the face, and he rode on. They met again in the evening at a public library, a fashionable promenade when the weather out of door was unfavorable. On beholding a second time, the apparition, the lady fainted, and was conveyed home by her uncle.

Stanwood called in the morning and was admitted. To Clara he was as one risen from the dead. On her lover's bankruptcy, her father hurried her from England, promising to return after a short stay in the east. Under one pretence or another, she was detained in luxurious captivity—she could bestow no milder term on her unwilling residence in the Indies—till Mr. Benson fell sick and died. By his will it appeared she was heiress of his wealth, under trust for a term of years, provided she did not marry Charles Stanwood; if she broke this stipulation, the property passed to the testator's brother, a merchant of Calcutta, who was appointed guardian. Her uncle being inclined to forsake commerce, she waited the arrangement of his affairs and under his escort returned to England. Since her return, she had made repeated inquiries of friends, but could learn nothing respecting Mr. Stanwood.

The lovers found Mr. Benson, far more considerate than his deceased brother. He executed an instrument reconveying his brother's property to his niece, on her marriage with the long-lost, and by all but Clara, forgotten Charles Stanwood. Once more the jeweller was visible in his old haunts in Bond street—not in his former capacity but in a new profession—a lounger like ourselves. From his lips—long after the aristocratic parties were at rest—we gleaned what we have narrated; and have only to add that the career of Charles and his wife was always smooth and unruffled.

◆

True Charity.

"Mamma," said little Charlotte, "I wish you would give me a penny to give to that poor boy at the gate. He looks very hungry, and says that he has not had a bite to eat all day. I am sorry for him. Do let me give him a penny to buy a penny roll."

"I thought you had a penny of your own, Charlotte, that your papa gave you this morning. He gave you and Harry a penny each."

"Yes, mamma, but I want mine to buy a cake while I am out."

"Do you think you will be hungry while you are out, my dear?"

"I don't know, mamma."

"If you think so, you may take a piece of bread and butter with you."

"But I like a cake best, mamma."

"I am afraid, Charlotte, you are not very sorry for that poor boy, since you would rather let him go away hungry than give up the pleasure of eating a cake, although you have had a good breakfast, and he has had none."

Just at that moment, Harry came up to the gate. The boy was standing there, begging still.

"Here, poor boy," said Harry, "here is a penny for you. I was going to buy a cake with it, but I am not hungry, and you are; so you may have the penny."

The boy thanked Harry, and ran over the way to the baker's to buy a penny roll, which he began to eat with joyful countenance.

Harry went away bowling his hoop, and thinking no more about the penny or the beggar boy; while Charlotte hung down her head and looked ashamed.

It is very [illegible] say we pity the misfortunes of others, but if we will not make a little sacrifice to relieve them, our pity is of no value, for it is not sincere. Charlotte was not unkind, but she was selfish. She would have felt glad to have given a penny to that boy, if she could have done so without depriving herself of something that she liked. But she [illegible] to give up her own enjoyment [illegible] of another. We cannot call [illegible] table. True charity is to give [illegible] spare, when we see that it will [illegible]

Harry [illegible] of cakes as Charlotte was, but he thought it would be much better for a boy who was hungry to have a piece of bread, than for one who was not hungry to have a cake. This was real feeling. [illegible] was true charity.

◆

Cleopatra's Breakfast.

There seems to be a diversity of opinion about Cleopatra's breakfasts. It was the most costly breakfast that has ever been served to a human being. I will, therefore, tell what I know about it. After having spoken of Cleopatra's necklace Mark Anthony determined to devise the costliest breakfast ever given. After several days of gastronomical meditations, not having found what he was looking for he summoned his cook to his presence, and told him that if he would get up a dainty breakfast for a lady, which should be composed of as few and small dishes as possible, and, at the same time be most costly, he would reward him accordingly. Several weeks afterward, the cook entered Mark Antony's study, and told him that he was ready to serve the dainty breakfast asked of him, and that it was composed of one olive only. At the appointed hour the cook entered the dining-room followed by one hundred men carrying the olive in its artificial envelope on their shoulders. They deposited it on the table made for the occasion, and fifty carvers were set to work on it. After several hours of hard work, the triumphant cook placed the olive before the Egyptian queen, who looked at it with amazement, still with perfect delight. The olive had been prepared in the following manner: After having been stoned, it was stuffed with a rich custard, then put inside of a boned canary, which was used to stuff an ortolan. The latter was placed inside a boned oriole, which was used to stuff a thrush, which thrush stuffed a boned lark. A boned snap was stuffed with the lark and placed inside of a robin, which filled a woodcock, the woodcock a partridge, the partridge a grouse, the grouse a pheasant, the pheasant a chicken, the chicken a guinea fowl, which was placed inside a goose; the goose filled a turkey, the turkey a swan, the latter an ostrich, which was used to stuff a sheep; the sheep a calf, the calf an antelope, the latter a pig, the pig a deer, the deer a bear, the bear a heifer, the latter an elk, the elk an ox, the ox a hippopotamous, the latter an elephant. The olive was then roasted in its envelope, which envelope was thrown away and the olive only was used.

◆

A young gent is discovered surrounded by his friends, who are jesting with him regarding his attentions to a certain young lady.

Young Gent.—"Boys, I'll tell you how it is. You see I care nothing for the girl—it is the old man's pocket-book I am after."

Chorus of Friends.—"Ha! ha!"

Scene Second—a parlor. Time, 11 P. M. Young gent seated. Young gent rises to depart, hesitates, as if bashful, and then slowly remarks:

"Miss Mattie, excuse me, but you must be aware that my frequent visits, my attentions, cannot have been without an object."

Young lady—"Ah, yes, so I've heard, and shall be only too happy to grant what you desire. (Takes from the table a paper parcel, and unfolding it, displays a large old-fashioned and EMPTY morocco pocketbook.) This, I have been informed is that object. Permit me to present it, and congratulate you that you will in future have no further occasion to renew these visits and attentions." Young gent swoons.

◆

Jack Frost brought an end to Yellow Jack in the South.

The most wholesome and genial of all stomachics and correctives, Hostetter's Stomach Bitters, produces an immediate and most beneficent change in the condition of the patient. The whole digestive system is at once invigorated and soothed, the liver regulated and toned, the bowels relieved of all obstructions, the spirits cheered, and the relaxed nerves strengthened and steadied.

◆

Rents are considerably lower in Washington. The Stewart mansion, which has hitherto been offered at an annual rent of $18,000, has been rented this year for $4000 to the Spanish Minister to the United States.

Sixty-four of the sixty-nine words which make up the Lord's prayer are Saxon.

VICK'S ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Each number contains THIRTY-TWO PAGES of reading, many fine Wood Cut Illustrations, and one COLORED PLATE. A beautiful Garden Magazine, printed on elegant paper, and full of information. In English and German. Price, $1.25 a year; Five copies, $5.00.

Vick's Flower and Vegetable Garden, 50 cents in paper covers; in elegant cloth covers, $1.00.

Vick's Catalogue,—300 Illustrations, only 2 cts.

Address JAMES VICK, Rochester, N. Y.

PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS! Latest invention; anybody can operate it with perfect success; complete outfits from $5 to $30. Chromo Photography outfits, $3; Heliograph, $2 50. Send stamp for full information to E. SACKMANN & Co., M'f'rs, 278 Pearl st., N. Y.
52—1

25 Fancy Cards, Snowflake, Damask, etc., no 2 alike, with name, 10c, Nassau Card Co., Nassau, N. Y.
52—12

DYKES' BEARD ELIXIR [illegible]
50—3teow

25 Snowflake Assorted Cards, with name 10c. Outfit 10c. SEAVY BROS., Northford, Ct.
50—6teow

Any Lady OR GENT THAT SENDS US their address will receive something of great value free by mail. Only about two hundred left. INVENTORS' UNION, Greenwich Street, New York.
46—13teow

PENMANSHIP TAUGHT BY MAIL, by Prof. R. C. Loveridge, of Yale Business College, New Haven, Conn. Send stamp for specimen and circular.
42—12teow

40 MIXED CARDS, with name, in a Card Case. 13 cts. Try us. H. LEE & CO., Middleboro, Mass.
53—13teow

NO
ADVERTISING

Gives so much for the money expended as that in the LISTS of the AMERICAN NEWSPAPER UNION, nor will any other advertising, we think, bring such returns.

$87,50 will secure the publication of a one-inch advertisement, with an electrotype, one week, in the entire lists of about **1000** weekly papers. It would cost an advertiser to send DIRECT to the same number of papers, of any description or anywhere, and obtain a like advertisement inserted, over **$1000**, SHOWING A NET SAVING OF OVER $900 IN THIS INSTANCE, BY GIVING THE ORDER TO US.

These 1000 or more papers are divided into six lists, covering different sections of the country. Advertisements are published in one or more lists, reaching such sections as may be desired.

A few other Figures for Advertisers to Consider.

An advertisement (changed each insertion, if desired) occupying the space of 14 lines (agate type) will be inserted at the prices given below:

$7 per week in **100** newspapers in Minnesota, Wisconsin, etc.
$8 per week in **105** newspapers in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, etc.
$12 per week in **120** newspapers in Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Georgia, Texas, etc.
$15 per week in **137** newspapers, in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, etc.
$21 per week in **260** newspapers in New England New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, etc.
$24,50 per week in **355** newspapers in Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin, etc.

No Extra Charge for inserting Electrotypes

Larger advertisements will be inserted at even more favorable rates. A discount of 5 per cent from the above rates will be allowed for an advertisement inserted two weeks; 10 per cent. for four weeks, 15 per cent. for eight weeks; 25 per cent. for thirteen weeks.

These papers circulate between **600,000** and **700,000** copies weekly.

For catalogues containing the names of the papers and full particulars, and for estimates, address

BEALS & FOSTER,
41 Park Row (Times Building) New York.
43tfo

25 Snowflake, Floral, Carrier Dove, Oriental, Morning Glory, Eastlake, Diamond, Scotch, etc.—Cards, no two alike, with name, 10c. National Co., Northford, Ct.
47—7

YOUR NAME printed on 60 Mixed Cards, for 13c. 25 Fun Cards, 10c. CLINTON BROS, Clintonville, Conn.
24—23

40 Extra Fine Mixed Cards, with name, 10 cts post-paid. L. JONES CO., Nassau, N. Y.
50—1

$350 A MONTH—AGENTS WANTED—36 best selling articles in the world; one sample free. Address JAY BRONSON, Detroit, Mich.
49—22

A MAN WANTED in every Co. in the U. S. to sell our POPULAR BOOKS. GOOD PAY and steady work. Write at once for terms, etc. J. C. McCURDY & Co., Philad'a
8—8

Big Pay to sell our Rubber Printing Stamps. Terms free. Taylor & Co., Cleveland, Ohio.
31—21

25 ELEGANT CARDS, no two alike, with name 10c. postpaid. J. B. HUSTED, Nassau, N. Y.
46—37

Big Pay made by Agents selling our Rubber Printing Stamps. Taylor, Bros. & Co., Cleveland, Ohio.
47—19

$3 WATCHES. Cheapest in the known world. *Sample watch and outfit free to Agents.* For terms address COULTER & CO., Chicago
10—9

OPIUM and Morphine habit absolutely and speedily cured. Painless; no publicity. Send stamp for particulars. Dr. Carlton, 187 Washington st., Chicago, Ill.
10—9

40 Flowered, Watered, Diamond, Egg, etc.—Cards, no two alike, with your name neatly printed on them all for 10c. Star Printing Co., Northford, Conn.
47—7

40 Mixed Cards, with name, in case 13c., in gold 20c. Outfit 10c. GEO. TURNER, Bristol, Conn.
51—2

30 Mixed Cards, with name, 10 cts., post-paid. Samples 3 cts. J. MINKLER & Co., Nassau, N. Y.
51—52

$1200 Salary. Salesmen wanted to sell our Staple Goods to dealers. No peddling. Expenses paid. Permanent employment. address S. A. GRANT & CO., 2, 4, 6 & 8 Home St., Cincinnati, O.
36—35

Big Pay to Agents selling my 10 new articles, Chromos, Watches, Jewelry, etc. Send for catalogue. R. MORRIS, Chicago, Ill.
44—3

50 LARGE MIXED CARDS, with name, 13c. or 40 in case 13c. Outfit 10c DOWD & Co., Bristol, Ct.
2—3

$2500 a year to Agents. *Outfit and a $25 Shot Gun free.* For terms address, *J. Worth & Co., St. Louis, Mo.*
10—9

Gleason's Pictorial

On the first of January, 1878, we shall commence the publication of a choice and truly elegant weekly Pictorial (being a new series), with the above title, which it is our purpose to make not only the best, but the cheapest illustrated weekly in the country.

The best of artists have been engaged, and the corps of contributors will comprise the most eminent story-writers of the day. Each number of the paper will be

Beautifully Illustrated.

It will contain views of every populous city in the known world, of all buildings of note in the eastern or western hemisphere, of all the principal ships and steamers of the navy and merchant service, with fine and accurate portraits of every noted character in the world, both male and female. Sketches of beautiful scenery, taken from life, will also be given, with numerous specimens from the animal kingdom, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea. A large weekly of sixteen octavo pages.

Besides the splendid illustrated

Stories of Sea and Land, Adventures, Anecdotes, etc. etc.,

Gleason's Pictorial

will contain several very interesting and instructive features, such as

HEALTH AND BEAUTY,

How to preserve the one and enhance the other.

ETIQUETTE OF COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE.

CONTAINING

Hints of Flirtation—Marriage—Making an Offer—Engagement—Modes of Marriage—Preparations for the Wedding—the Wedding-Day—After the Ceremony—After Marriage—Parting Advice to a Married Lady, etc.

Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen.

CONTAINING

Hints of Introduction and Acquaintances Letters of Introduction—Calls—Conversation—Dress and the Toilet—Letters and Notes—Out of Doors—Parties—Presents—The Ball-Room—Staying at Friends' Houses—Giving Dinner Parties—Attending Dinner Parties, etc.

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS.

Containing the Names, Sentiments, and Emblems of the Floral World.

PROVERBS OF ALL NATIONS,

And many other charming and important features too numerous to mention here.

The paper will be commenced with the unprecedented circulation of about half a million weekly, a number which no paper in the world ever attained, and in order to maintain this enormous circulation, and increase thereon, we have, at once put the price at the remarkable low figure of only

Two Dollars a Year, Postage Free.

4 subscribers, one year........................$7.00
8 " " " 12.00
16 " " " 20.00

And one *gratis* to the getter-up of a club of sixteen.

The first number of GLEASON'S PICTORIAL will be ready and for sale by all the newsdealers in the United States, as early as Saturday, the 22d of December, for only 5 cents per copy. Sample copies will be sent *free* of postage on receipt of 5 cents, by addressing

F. GLEASON & CO.,
738 Washington Street, Boston, Mass.

KNOW THYSELF A new Medical Treatise, "THE SCIENCE OF LIFE, OR SELF-PRESERVATION," a book for everybody. Price $1, sent by mail. Fifty original prescriptions, either one of which is worth ten times the price of the book. Gold Medal awarded the author. The Boston Herald says: "The Science of Life is, beyond all comparison, the most extraordinary work on Physiology ever published." An Illustrated Pamphlet sent FREE. Address DR. W. H. PARKER, No. 4 Bulfinch Street, Boston, Mass. HEAL THYSELF
50—49

BROWN'S BRONCHIAL TROCHES

COUGHS AND COLDS. "BROWN'S BRONCHIAL TROCHES" will allay irritation which induces coughing, and gives immediate relief in Bronchitis, Catarrh, Influenza, Hoarseness, Sore Throat, and Consumptive and Asthmatic Complaints. The 'Bronchial Troches' have been steadily winning their way into public favor, until they are known and used nearly all over the world.
50—14

The Mammoth Package.

ALMOST GIVEN AWAY. Six highly colored chromos, 10x12, 1 map of N. Y. City colored, 1 pack of Trick Cards, 1 pack of age cards, 1 Ventriloquist Whistle, 1 piece of latest music, 1 latest Dime Songster, 1 set of fine Shirt-Studs, 1 Watch-chain, 1 Gents elegant Collar Button, 1 handsome Scarf Pin. The lot only 50 cents. Postage stamps taken. Address M. J. IVERS, 113 Fulton Street, New York.
43—42

25 FANCY CARDS, snowflake, damask, &c., no two alike, with name, 10c. Nassau Card Co., Nassau, N. Y.
45—5

SALES MEN WANTED ON A YEARLY SALARY $125 A MONTH and all expenses, to sell to DEALERS. Samples FREE. Send 3c. stamp to insure answer. S. FOSTER & CO., Cincinnati, O. CIGARS
43—13

FREE MAMMOTH OUTFIT TO EVERYBODY. Stem-winder watch *free* with first order. *Ten Dollars* a day guaranteed. M. CRONEGH & CO., Philadelphia, Pa., or Milwaukee, Wis.
42—2

60 MIXED CARDS, with name and card case, 15c. H. CLAYTON & Co., Bristol, Conn.
39—10

$200,000

GREATEST In order to clear out our stock of very superior Gold-plated Jewelry valued at over *$200,000*, we will send as below, *20* Pieces, all warranted Gold-plated, for *$1.00*. 1 pair Gold Stone Sleeve Buttons, 1 pair Engraved Sleeve Buttons, 1 set Pointed Studs, 1 set Amethyst Studs, 1 Wedding Ring, 1 Engraved Band Finger Ring, 1 Amethyst Stone Ring Inlaid with Gold, 1 Elegant Ring Marked "Friendship," 1

BARGAIN Amethyst Stone Scarf Pin Inlaid with Gold, 1 Silvered Hat Pin, 1 set Ladies' Jet and Gold Pin and Drops, 1 Misses' set Jet and Gold, 1 Collar Stud, 1 set Handsome Rosebud Ear Drops, 1 Gents' Elegant Lake George Diamond Stud, 1 Cardinal Red Bead Necklace, 1 pair Ladies' Amethyst Stone Ear Drops Inlaid with Gold, 1 Ladies' Ornamented

EVER Jet Brooch, 1 Fancy Scarf Ring and Elegant Watch Chain. *Take your choice, the entire lot of 20 pieces, sent Post-paid for $1.00, or any 8 pieces you choose for 50 cents. Now is the time to Make Money. These can easily be retailed at $10.*

CLUB PREMIUM. *To any one ordering 12 Lots at $1.00 each, we will present Free, an Open Face Coin Silver Watch as Premium.*

OFFERED

F. STOCKMAN, 27 Bond Street, New York.
40—7

25 Fashionable Cards, no two alike, with name, 10 cts., post paid. GEO. I. REED & Co., Nassau, N. Y.
42—41

WOMAN AND MARRIAGE Two interesting works of 475 pages, beautifully illustrated. A Marriage Guide on woman and her diseases, Marriage, Reproduction and Sterility; and a Private Medical Adviser on the disorders and abuses of the Male Reproductive organs, Generative Debility and Impotence, with the best means of cure, sent to any address on receipt of 75 cts. by DR. BUTTS, No. 12 N. 8th street, St. Louis, Mo.
36—35

WORK FOR ALL

IN their own localities. Large pay guaranteed to Agents. Business light and easy to conduct. Suitable for all sexes and ages. **Terms and Outfit Free!** Address P. O. VICKERY, Augusta, Maine.
43—16

THE STRING OF EMERALDS.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

By Emma Garrison Jones.

I WONDER if any of my readers feel about Christmas as I do,—if it ever brings to them as it does to me a sensation—not sadness, but something for which I can find no name—a feeling, half expectation, half regret, "which resembles sadness only as mist resembles rain?" Perhaps not; hence it is useless for me to waste words in endeavoring to make those who have never known my experience to understand me.

But never do I stand upon the receding shores of the old year, listening to the "merry, merry bells of Yale," without experiencing this strange, nameless feeling of unrest, as if at that time, and no other, the one great, crowning blessing for which my life waits and hopes, came near, overshadowing me with its bright wings, and then swept off again into the far, dim future, leaving me gazing after it with disappointed eyes.

A silly fancy, you think, no doubt—and it may be—but it is real enough to me. There is no effect, it is said, without some specific cause, and my peculiar emotions during these happy days of Yale, owe their origin, in all probability, to a little circumstance which occurred years ago, and concerning which I beg leave to tell you. In order to do this plainly, I must almost weary your patience with a brief sketch of my own life.

My father was a sea captain, and made semi-annual trips in a trim, little vessel called the "Albatross." How vividly I remember the season of rejoicing that visited our cottage twice a year when father came home! He usually arrived at June and at Christmas, and my mother, a sweet, quiet little body, with a perfect genius for housewifery, made it a sacred custom to cleanse and adorn the cottage from cellar to garret, to rig myself and my little sister Allie out in in new suits, and to cook up as many nice things as her somewhat limited means could possibly scrape together. Then a kind of feast went on for weeks sometimes, and the neighbors dropped in, one by one, to shake hands with Cap'n Seaton, and receive a bit of tortoise shell, or a spray of coral, as a present, and to taste mother's brown turkeys and fleecy pies. Ah me! no wonder my heart yearns at the ringing of the Yale bells:—Allie and I have no such Christmases now."

I wonder if it is true that the enchantment of the Past lies in its far-remoteness? I cannot believe it,—for those days must have been brighter, in reality as well as imagination, than any that come to me now.

"But I will go on with my story. Father usually remained at home a month, and then sailed again, and mother and Allie and I fell back into our old, quiet life, until another season of jubilee came round. In this way the years wore on, until I was ten years old, and when my father sailed the June following, he talked of taking me on his next trip. It was time, he said, that I was learning something, and mother, who saw everything through his eyes, thought the idea a good one. Allie and I talked of it incessantly as the fall months slipped by—I was to bring her a whole chest of things—trinkets—and shells, and corals—there was no end to our planning. Mother made me two good, substantial winter suits, and a set of shirts with broad, sailor collars—I was all ready for my voyage. It was early in December. Mother had already begun with her cleaning; the bedroom floors were as white as snow, and the tins on the kitchen shelf shone like silver. Very soon preparation for the Christmas feast would begin. But one evening, I remember it well—a cold, cheerless evening, with a promise of snow in the moaning winds, and low, leaden clouds, dreadful news came. The "Albatross" would never come home any more; she had gone down at sea, and all her crew with her.

Mother did not faint, or talk of dying, though I am sure she loved the husband who slept far from her beneath the stormy waves with a devotion as true and changeless as heaven; but she put by every semblance of Christmas joy, and set herself to work with a cheek several degrees paler, and tears that would fall in spite of all her efforts to keep them back.

We were left very poor, for father had taken all his surplus money with him, and we had no kind of an income to depend on. But mother determined to keep Allie and myself at school if possible, and strove to earn enough by her needle to support us; but she scarcely made ends meet, though she worked all night many times, as well as day. A year dragged by, and a cold, cruel winter set in. Prices went up at a fearful rate. On Christmas eve we were without a stick of wood or a slice of bread.

I remember the evening well. I had been running round all day, trying to make something by doing chores, and towards nightfall I returned home, weary and heartsore, with a pitiful quarter in my pocket.

"It will help some, Johnny," said my mother, as I put it in her hand, striving to bring a feeble smile to her wan face; "it will get some little thing for you and Allie—I'm sorry I've had such bad luck with my work; I laid out to have a small turkey, and a pie or two—not that I mind," with a quivering sigh, "but children want such things. However, we must do without."

"Mother," cried Allie, thoughtlessly, "you promised me a doll on Christmas—ain't you goin' to get it?"

"I would if I could, Allie, but I haven't the money."

"O mother, and you promised—and I picked all the stitches out for you, and did ever so many things."

Mother's eyes filled with tears, but she brushed them away, and went on pressing the pants she had just finished.

"I know I promised, dear, and you have been a very good girl, and you shall have it, and a new frock, too, just as soon as I can raise the money. And now, Johnny," she continued, turning to me as she folded the pants, "take these up to Mr. Renshawe's, and tell him to send a joint of bacon and half a bushel of meal. You'll remember? And don't stay—it's getting dark—and we must have some wood for to-morrow."

She followed me to the door, pulling down the ears of my cap, and putting a comforter round my neck.

"Johnny," she whispered, just as I was stepping out, "do you think you could go to the village when you come back?"

"Yes, mother."

"Well," her eyes filled with tears, and her lips trembling painfully, "you may go up, and—and—sell that chain and cross—you know?—I have your father's ring and the locket. I hate to do it, but we *must* have some wood, and some tea—and you may get Allie a doll—she's set her heart on it so—"

I rushed out into the snow, half blinded by tears, with a bitter, desperate feeling at my heart. Why has God made my poor mother's lot so hard, and other people's so easy? She was good and honest—why wasn't she rewarded? Such questions filled my mind as I hurried on. Gaily painted sleighs, filled with happy, young people, flashed past me, with a merry chime of bells, and comfortable looking men and women crossed my path on their way from market, laden with turkeys, and evergreens, and all manner of Christmas knicknacks.

The tears froze on my cheeks, and my heart seemed to freeze too. Mr. Renshawe's great house loomed up proudly before me, almost before I knew it, so greatly had my thoughts been pre-occupied. The servant who answered my ring conducted me up to the library, where the master of the house and his daughter were sitting, amusing themselves over a book of prints. A soft, warm, perfumed atmosphere greeted me as I entered, and objects of beauty and luxury met me at every glance. Why should they have so much, and my poor mother so little? The question rang in my brain so loudly that I did not hear Mr. Renshawe's remark until he had repeated it a second time.

"So you've brought my new pantaloons," he said, with a kind smile.

"Yes sir, and mother says please send her half a bushel of meal and a joint of bacon."

"Certainly—and tell her to send up whenever she wants anything—we shall have more sewing for her as soon as the holidays are over. Now," he continued, taking the garment and shaking it out, "I'll go down and let Mrs. Renshawe see if any alteration is needed. Sit down and warm yourself, my lad."

He left the room, and I sank down on the edge of a velvet lounge. The little girl went on looking at her pictures, glancing at me shyly every now and then through her yellow curls. I was still thinking of my mother with a bitter, aching heart, when the firelight flashed on some bright object lying on the lounge beside me. I looked down and saw an open casket containing a string of some kind of blazing jewels, and swift as lightning, for the first time in my life, a dishonest suggestion darted through my mind. If I could take them—and sell them—mother could keep the chain and cross father gave her, and Allie could have her doll! Why not?—these people would never feel the loss of them. The temptation grew irresistible. I glanced towards the little girl, put down my hand stealthily, closed the casket, and slipped it in my pocket. At the same time Mr. Renshawe re-entered the room, praising my mother's skilful work. I got out of the room and down the stairway before I knew what I was doing.

At the door I paused, faint and trembling. What had I done? What would my mother say? My cheeks burned like fire, and I drew out the casket, determined to leave it in the hall. But a thought of mother and Allie's doll made me hesitate to put it down, and hearing footsteps approaching, I hurried it into my bosom and darted out into the snow. Once out, I seemed to breathe free again, and fancying mother's joy and Allie's surprise, I concluded to go by the village and sell the necklace, and purchase the things we needed before I returned home. I did not think of what account I should give to mother; indeed in my bewildered haste the idea did not occur to me, until half breathless and covered with snow, I entered the village. Then I came to a sudden halt. I could not lie to my mother—I would have died first. What should I do? Standing there, with the gleaming windows of the Christmas shops around me, I felt the full weight of my guilt and disgrace, and would gladly have given my life, I believe, to have recalled the act. But it was too late. The thought gave me a kind of desperation, and consoling myself with the foolish idea that I should think of something to tell my mother before I got home, I hurried on. The sight of a mammoth china doll, in a pink satin robe, glittering in one of the windows, greatly increased my confidence, and my heart was in a tremor of expectation when I reached the principal jewellers.

Several ladies stood around the counters, examining articles of jewelry, and I slunk back, afraid to enter. At last, however, they sauntered out, one by one, and with my heart in my throat, and a burning blush on my cheeks, I went up to the counter and drew the casket from my bosom. For a moment or so, so great was my agitation, that I could not for my life articulate a single word; but seeing the eyes of the jeweller bent upon me with wondering surprise, I at last succeeded in gasping out:

"Will you buy that, sir?" holding the casket towards him.

He took it, turned it over, opened it, lifted the string of jewels, and examined the clasp with great care. Then he looked up with a frown upon his brow.

"Who sent you to sell this?" he asked, sternly.

"No one," I stammered, feeling my teeth beginning to chatter, and my knees growing weak.

"How did you come by it?" he continued. "Answer me, the truth!"

I had stolen, but I could not lie; so I hung down my head in abashed silence.

"You stole this casket," he went on, bending over the counter and grasping me by the shoulder. "I sold it to Mr. Renshawe not two hours ago for his little daughter—there's her name on the clasp. Come, you must remain here until I send for Mr. Renshawe."

He led me along to the lower end of the store, and ushered me into a small sitting apartment. As he turned away, closing and locking the door after him, he said, with genuine pity in his glance and voice:

"Poor boy! so young, and a rogue. I didn't think a son of Captain Seaton would ever come to that."

My God! shall I ever get over the deep, burning humiliation of that moment? Never! It clings to me yet, like a haunting curse, and will until I go down to my grave. We cannot sin wilfully without receiving the brand upon our foreheads, and although the sin itself may be repented of and pardoned, the accursed mark goes with us to our graves.

I sunk into a chair by the window. The snow was pouring down, and the evening rapidly closing in. Mother was standing in the door at that instant, watching for my return, I knew, and the thought almost made me frantic. I might have been at home long before that time—free—innocent. Now, in all probability, I should go to prison, and poor mother and little Allie—what would they feel? There will be no need of actual fire, or corporal suffering, to complete the punishment of those who die unredeemed; remorse will be all sufficient. Its sting is sharper a thousand fold than the adder's. I know, for I felt it that evening, kneeling by that snowy window, with the scalding tears of a repentance that was too late streaming down my cheeks.

In a little while the opening of the door aroused me, and I rose to my feet to meet Mr. Renshawe and his little daughter. I sought his face eagerly; it was pitiful, tenderly pitiful, but not wrathful.

"My lad," he said, in a voice that would have been very kind but for its intense sadness, "how came you to take this casket?"

I told him frankly the whole story from beginning to end. When I had finished, the little girl who had hung behind her father rushed forward impetuously, and threw her arms round my neck, crying as if her heart would break.

"O papa," she sobbed, "give it back to him; I don't want it—and all the money you promised me for to-morrow—poor, poor little boy."

Mr. Renshawe took out his pocket handkerchief and wiped his eyes. Then taking my hand, said, kindly:

"My boy, this is your first temptation; let it be your last. Remember always that no good ever comes of sinning. We will drop the matter now. You shall never hear of it again. Go home, and be a comfort to your mother."

I tried to speak, but tears choked my utterance. He shook my hand and said:

"I know what you would say, my boy, and I believe you are sincere."

I flew through the shop, out into the snow, down the street that led to my mother's cottage. There was a strange glow at my heart, warmer and tenderer than I had ever felt before. I am sure that under no circumstances could I have been induced to repeat the crime. But looking back at it now, I am convinced that if Mr. Renshawe had dealt harshly with me, and given me over into the hands of the law, I should have taken the downward course, and at this time, no doubt, have been expiating my crimes in the state prison.

It was quite dark when I reached home, but mother was in the door, her hair white with snow, awaiting my coming. She caught me to her bosom with a little sob as I came up.

"Oh, Johnny," she said, "I've been so uneasy—what has been the matter? Why have you stayed so long?"

I would have given the whole world if it had been mine, to have been spared the burning shame of confessing: but it had to be done. No falsehood must come between my mother's heart and mine. I led her into the little bedroom and told her all—everything just as it happened. When I had finished tears lay thickly on her cheeks, but her tender lips (they are cold in the grave now) uttered no word of blame or rebuke.

"Let us pray, Johnny," she said, gently, "that God will deliver us from temptation."

She prayed, kneeling beside her humble couch, and the memory of her prayer has never left me. In moments of recklessness in hours of despair, in seasons of triumph, it has been a kind of monitor, keeping me in my place, and if when life's storms are over, it is my happy lot to be admitted into the white-robed throng that [illegible] golden streets, I shall owe my redemption to mother's prayers.

The next morning was Christmas; "the merry bells of Yale" rang from every tower and steeple. At an early hour I was up and on my way to the forest for an armful of sticks to kindle our breakfast fire, for we had no wood. But on my return, I met with a glad surprise. A large pile of oak wood blockaded the kitchen door, and on the steps stood a basket with a placard hanging from the handle, I read the pencilled words, "A Christmas gift for Mrs. Seaton," well knowing whose hands had sent it.

Mother and Allie were speedily awakened, and then we had a great time over our treasures. Tea and sugar, and loaves of bread, and ham, and a new dress for mother and Allie, and books and clothing for me, and at the bottom a great frosted cake, and a large china doll, magnificently dressed. How little Allie laughed and clapped her hands! After all, we had a comfortable [illegible] Christmas.

* * * * * *

Fifteen years after. Mother and [illegible] had left me; mother had gone to the [illegible] hereafter, and Allie was happily married. I was a prosperous man, so far as worldly matters went. Success had crowned my efforts, but I was lonely and solitary in the great city whither I had gone, homeless and friendless as it were, standing behind the counter where my costly jewels lay, all day, and sitting in my lonely room at night, yearning for a hearthstone of my own, with a loving face to gladden and brighten it.

One evening in mid-winter, a few days before Christmas, I sat in a corner, occupied in polishing my gems, and in listening to the wailing voice of the winds, when a lady entered and approached the counter. Supposing her to be a customer, I rose to meet her. She shook the snow from her scanty wrappings and threw back the veil that covered her face. It was a young and lovely face, sweet and womanly, with soft, blue eyes, and golden hair; but it was pale and careworn, wearing the impress of constant care and sorrow. She approached me timidly, and drew out a rich jewel case.

"I wish to dispose of these, sir," she said, speaking in a low, musical voice. "Will you please tell me what you can give for them?"

I opened the case and looked them over. A small watch, exquisitely set with jewels, a ring or two, a set of rubies, and an emerald necklace. I held it up with a start of surprise. The same one, the very same—I could have sworn to it—and there was her name, "Rose Renshawe," on the clasp. My hands trembled so that I could scarcely hold it as that snowy evening rushed back to my memory, and my cheeks tingled again with shame just as they did when I committed my first and only crime. But her sweet, expectant eyes were on me, and her soft voice in my ear, repeating the question. Rose Renshawe, the dear, little girl who had seemed to pity me so much. I recognized her at a second glance. I turned the jewels over, examining them carefully. She watched me in breathless suspense.

"I will give you five thousand dollars," I said, at last.

She started, clasping her hands joyously. "Oh, sir, are they worth so much as that?"

"They are worth more to me," I said, as I counted out the money.

So they were, because of the pleasure it gave me to repay the debt of gratitude I owed her. I was a rich man then, and could well afford it. She left the shop, her face all aglow with happiness. I took up my hat and followed her through low, deserted streets, into a poverty-stricken portion of the city. She paused before the door of an ordinary boarding-house, and then entered. The night was closing in dark and stormy, but I lingered, debating within myself whether or not I should go in and seek an interview with my old benefactor. While I stood thus, she came out again, in great haste, her face white and startled—forgetting myself, I rushed to her side at once.

"What is it, madam? Can I help you?"

She looked surprised for an instant, and then said:

"Oh, sir, my poor father is ill—dying, perhaps, and I must go for a doctor. I have no one to send."

"Go back to him; I will bring one."

She obeyed me instantly, and a few moments later I stood by the old man's couch, with a skillful physician. It was a sudden stroke of paralysis, and there was no hope. But he became easy and conscious before morning, and I made myself known to him. He grasped my hand warmly, and his face glowed with delight. Then he told me his sad story, how he had failed in consequence of large security debts having fallen upon him, how his wife had died, and he and Rose had wandered from city to city, vainly endeavoring to retrieve their fallen fortunes.

"But you will look after her," he said, at last, still holding my hand. "Poor Rose! She has no friends in the wide world; but she's a brave girl, and will get on finely, with a little help. You'll help her, won't you, in memory of old times?"

I promised him that she should never want a friend as long as I lived, and he died before morning, clasping my hand, with a happy smile on his face.

Six months after, beautiful Rose became my wife, and I gave her back her case of jewels as a bridal gift.

I am no longer a homeless, solitary man—I have a hearthstone of my own, and the sweetest of wifely faces to brighten it, and lisping voices to make music in my home. I am very happy. God has filled my cup of joy full to overflowing.

◆

ELM TREE HALL;

OR

Do not Meddle with what does not Belong to You.

ABOUT twenty years ago there lived a singular old gentleman in the Hall among the Elm Trees. He was about three score years of age, very rich, and somewhat old in his habits; but for generosity and benevolence he had no equal. No poor cottage stood in need of comforts, which he was not ready to supply; no sick man or woman languished for want of his assistance; nor even a beggar, unless a known impostor, went empty handed from the Hall.

Now it happened that the old gentleman wanted a boy to wait on him at table, and to attend him in different ways, for he was very fond of young people. But as much as he liked the society of the young, he had a great aversion to that curiosity in which many people are too apt to indulge. He used to say, "The boy who will peep into a drawer will be tempted to take something out of it; and he who steals a penny in his youth will steal a pound in his manhood." This disposition to repress evil as well as to encourage good conduct, formed a part of his character, for though of a cheerful temper, and not given to severity, he would not pass over a fault till it was acknowedged or repented of.

No sooner was it known that he was in want of a servant, than twenty applications were made for the situation; but he determined not to engage any till he had ascertained that he did not possess a curious, prying disposition.

It was Monday morning that seven lads dressed in their Sunday clothes, with bright and happy faces, made their appearance at the Hall, each of them desirous to obtain the situation they applied for. Now, the old gentleman, being of a singular disposition, had prepared a room in such a way that he might easily know if any of the young people who applied to be his servant were given to meddle unnecessarily with things around them, or to peep into cupboards and drawers. He took care that the lads who were then at Elm Tree Hall, should be shown into this room, one after another.

At first James Turner was sent into the room, and told that he would have to wait a little; so James sat down on a chair near the door. For some time he was quiet and looked about him; but there seemed to be so many curious things in the room that at last he got up to peep at them.

On the table was placed a dish-cover, and James wanted sadly to know what was under it, but he felt afraid to lift it up. Bad habits are strong things, and James was of a curious disposition: he could not withstand the temptation of taking one peep; so he lifted the cover. This turned out to be a sad affair; for under the dish-cover was a heap of light feathers; part of the feathers, drawn up by the current of air, flew about the room, and James in his fright, putting down the cover hastily, puffed the rest of them off the table. What was to be done? James began quickly to pick up the feathers, one by one; but the old gentleman who was in the adjoining room, hearing a scuffle, and guessing the cause, entered the room, to the consternation of James Turner, who was very soon dismissed as a boy who had not principle enough to resist the slightest tempation.

When the room was once more arranged, Thomas Hawker was placed there until such time as he should be sent for. No sooner was he left to himself, than his attention was attracted by a plate of fine ripe cherries. Now Thomas was uncommonly fond of cherries, and he thought it would be impossible to miss one among so many. He looked and longed, and longed and looked for some time; and just as he had got off his seat to take one, he heard as he thought a foot coming to the door; but no, it was a false alarm. Taking fresh courage, he went and took a very fine cherry, for he was determined to take but one, and put it in his mouth. It was excellent; and he then persuaded himself that he ran no great risk in taking another; that he did, and hastily popped it into his mouth. Now the old gentleman had placed a few small cherries at the top of the others, filled with Cayenne pepper; one of these, Thomas had unfortunately taken, and it made his mouth smart and burn intolerably. The old gentleman heard him coughing, and knew very well what was the matter. The boy who would take what did not belong to him, if no more than cherry, was not the boy for him. Thomas Hawker was sent about his business without delay, with his mouth almost as hot as if he had put a burning coal into it.

William Barker was next introduced into the room and left to himself: but he had not been in the room two minutes before he began to move from one place to another. He was of a bold resolute temper, but not overburdened with principle. Having looked around the room, he noticed a drawer to the table, and made up his mind to peep therein, but no sooner did he lay hold on the knob of the drawer, than he set a large bell ringing, which was concealed under the table. The old gentleman immediately answered the summons, and entered the room. William was so startled at the sudden ringing of the bell, that all his impudence could not support him: he looked as though any one might knock him down with a feather. The old gentleman asked him if he rang the bell because he wanted anything? William was much confused and stammered, and tried to excuse himself, but all to no purpose, for it did not prevent his being ordered off the premises.

Samuel Jones was then shown into the room by an old steward; and being of a curious disposition, he touched nothing, but only looked at the things about him. At last, he saw that a closet door was a little open, and thinking that it would be impossible for any one to know that he had opened it a little more, he very cautiously opened it an inch farther, looking down at the bottom of the door, that it might not catch against anything and make a noise. Now had he looked at the top, instead of the bottom of the door, it would have been better for him, for at the top was fastened a plug, which filled the hole of a small barrel of shot. He ventured to open the door, till the plug being pulled out of the barrel, the leaden shot began to pour out at a strange rate; at the bottom of the closet was placed a pan, and the shot falling upon this made such a clatter that Samuel was frightened out of his senses. The old gentleman soon came into the room to inquire what was the matter, and there he saw Samuel as white as a sheet.

It now came Harry Roberts turn to be put into the room. The other boys had been sent to their home in different directions, and no one knew what the experience of others had been in the room of trial. On one table stood a small round box, with a screw top to it, and Harry thinking it contained something curious, could not be easy without unscrewing the top; but no sooner did he do this, than out pounced an artificial snake full a yard long, and fell upon his arm. He started back, and uttered a scream, which brought the old gentleman to his elbow. There stood Harry with the bottom of the box in one hand, the top in the other, and the snake on the floor. "Come, come," said the old gentleman, handing him out of the room "one snake is quite enough to have in the house at a time, therefore the sooner you are gone the better;" with that he dismissed him without waiting a moment for his reply.

Roger Bell next entered the room, and being alone, soon commenced amusing himself by looking at the curiosities around him. Roger was not only curious and prying, but dishonest too; and observing that the key was left in the drawer of a bookcase, he stepped on tiptoe in that direction; but the moment he touched the key, which had wire fastened to it, communicating with an electric machine, Roger received such a shock as he was not likely to forget. No sooner did he sufficiently recover himself to walk, than he was told to leave the house, and leave other people to look and unlock their own drawers.

The last boy was John Grove, and though he was left alone in the room full twenty minutes, he never during the time, stirred from the chair. John had his eyes in his head as well as others, but he had more integrity in his heart; neither the dish-cover, the cherries, the drawer-knob, the closet door, the round box, nor the key tempted him to rise from his seat, and the consequence was, that in half an hour, he was engaged in the services of the old gentleman at Elm Tree Hall.

John Grove followed his old master to his grave, and received a large legacy for his upright conduct in his service. Read this, ye busy, meddling, peeping, pilfering young people, and imitate the example of John Grove.

◆

A Veritable Dogberry.

Old Dugood came into the bar-room the other day and took a seat among the idlers there assembled. The dog-question was under discussion, and after listening to a few wonderful stories, Dugood chipped in as follows: Now boss, you all talk as you please about the smart things dogs hev done, but I can just tell you something that will lay over all your stories. I don't 'spect you'll believe a man when he's a telling ye's the truth, but this is true as the Gospel. Yous all know that big yaller dog of mine? Well, that dog is the smartest dog in the drove. He's an intellectual dog, he is. Now, I know you won't believe me, but that ar' dog's been learning to sing?"

"Learning to sing? Get out!" interrupted one of the listeners.

"Yes, sir, that's so, every word of it; and I'll just tell you how it was. 'Tother night we had some singing at our house. You know our Sal's been goin' to the singin' school lately, and she and the other fellers and gals hev got so they can squawk like blazes. And so most every night they meet at somebody's house and practice. Well, the other night there was a whole crew on' em' at our house, and they had a big time. Such a screechin' an' hollerin' you never heard in all your lives. You'd hev thought that a whole gang of tom-cats had broke loose and tackled Squire Jones's bull, and were just havin' it hot and heavy. Well, that ar' dog was in the room while they wor singin' and he was the most interested creature I ever saw. He watched them beatin' the time and goin' through the manoovers, and 'peared to understand 'em as well as they did. At first they sung lively tunes you know; and putty soon, when they got tired of these, they commenced on salms and hymns and other serious things. The dog 'peared to like these better than he did the lively tunes, and sot down as close to 'em as he could while they sung. At last the gals coaxed Jim Blowhard to sing 'Old Hundred.' You know what an old tearin' voice Jim has. When he commenced, the dog began to get dreadfully interested. He pointed his nose right up at the ceilin' and every time Jim came to the low notes he'd sorter bowl."

"Who? Jim?"

"No, blast you, the dog. Blowhard he sung away for a while, and jest then he turned round and kinder hit his hind legs."

"Gosh amighty! Blowhard?"

"No, you old fool, you, the dog, of course. Then sez I to the old woman; 'Nancy Jane,' sez I. 'You jest bet your boots that dog's got something in his head.' Jest then the dog picked up somethin' in his mouth and bolted out of the room. I didn't pay much attention to it, and nobody else noticed it. When Blowhard finished, all the gals crowded round him, when suddenly we all heard a noise. It was the orfullest noise ever anybody heard. Everybody was scared to death. Six girls fainted away in Blowhard's arms all at once. They were hangin' on to him from all sides, like string-beans to a pole. Blowhard sot still for a moment or two. It was more huggin' than he could stand, and he wilted right off his seat onto the floor and tried to crawl under the sofa. Before he got morn'n his head and shoulders under, the gals all came to, and caught him by the feet and tried to pull him out. Blowhard held on to the sofa-legs, and bellowed murder; and the gals screeched, and some on 'em run around the room nineteen times in a minit before they could find anything else to faint onto. I picked up a candle and rushed into the back yard with two or three of the spunkiest men, and what do you think that dog was doing? He'd got a music-book spread out before him, and was beatin' time with his tail on a tin pan, and a howling 'Old Hundred' like all possessed."

◆

Never be Idle.

Idleness is a sin. It is ruinous to the soul and body, and it leads to many other sins; for

Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

There is enough to be done to employ the heart, and the head and the hands. An idle person will soon lose his self-respect, and he will not be likely to be respected by others. It is no disgrace to work for a living, but it is a disgrace to be idle.

◆

Two things in this world that should not be trifled with—a woman's opinion and the business end of a hornet.

GLEASON'S WEEKLY
HOME CIRCLE
WASHINGTON STREET
NO. 738
BOSTON

Frederick Gleason, & Co.,
Editors and Proprietors.

"A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL."

We give our readers the compliments of the season. We trust it will be a pleasant one to all, and that each home where our paper has the privilege of entering as a friend, will be tenderly guarded during the coming year.

◆

Great Reduction of Price.

Commencing with No. 1, Vol. 10, for the new year, we shall reduce the price of the *Home Circle* from $2.50 to

$2 a Year,

and single copies from 6 cents to 5 cents. A corresponding reduction will be made to newsdealers.

☞ *See imprint on last page.*

TIME OUT.

The present number of our paper completes the year 1877. In accordance with our invariable rule, we always discontinue our paper without further notice, when the time for which subscribers have paid is up. Those of our subscribers, therefore, who have paid for 1877, will greatly oblige us by renewing their subscriptions for 1878 as early as may be convenient for them.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mary G.—This lady writes: "I have taken the Home Circle for the past three years, and its perusal has given me much comfort, and my son is delighted with it. Though a widow, and obliged to earn my living by the needle, I would not be deprived of the reading of the Home Circle on any account."

A Constant Reader.—If our correspondent has any regard for her health she will avoid the use of any wash or cosmetic; it is always dangerous to remove eruptions from the skin by what is popularly called driving them in; in most instances they are merely an evidence that nature is endeavoring to relieve herself of some morbid secretion by which she is oppressed, and in such a case, temperance, exercise and a dose of wholesome physic, will be the best cosmetics, not perhaps to render the skin white, for a white skin indicates disease or weakness, but to cause it to be clean and healthy.

Julia.—The emerald is a precious stone of a green color, found in the East and in Peru; inferior ones in other places. It has been alleged that there were no true emeralds in Europe before the conquest of Peru; but there is a genuine emerald in the Paris Museum, taken from the mitre of Julius II. who died in 1513, and Peru was not conquered till 1545. Hence it is inferred that this emerald came from Africa or the East.

Emma H.—The whole discussion as to the relative superiority or inferiority of man or woman is utterly idle and stupid. There is no superiority or inferiority in the case. Man and woman are perfect and complete equals. They exactly balance and supplement one another. Each is necessary to the other's existence, happiness and well-being. One is just as great as the other and just as little, just as wise and just as foolish, just as mean and just as magnanimous. Their spheres of action are of course different, and they differ in the modes and degree of manifesting their powers; but in the sight of their Creator, and in the nature and essence of things, they are exact equals. If any exceptions to this be possible, they probably occur in the case of henpecked husbands—and their wives.

Louisa asks what exercise we would recommend to her. She states that she is employed in a bookbinding establishment, and the stooping posture she is compelled to assume by contracting her chest, has had a very bad effect upon her health, which is not improved by her daily walks to and fro from her residence to the place where she works. We would recommend a moderate use of the dumb bells at certain periods of the day for a few minutes at a time. In fact this is the most healthy exercise for males or females whose employments are sedentary. They might be used to advantage in all factories, workshops, &c.

L. C.—Chemists sell a red lip-salve, which gives that "beautiful scarlet" you inquire about. Painting the lips, we are sorry to say, is now a common practice with both sexes. The mineral commonly sold for the purpose is a deadly poison.

George.—Long after the burning of Moscow, St. Petersburg was considered the capital of Russia, though, in olden time, Moscow was the Russian metropolis.

NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS.

Our subscribers will notice, printed at the end of their names, the number of the paper at which their time will be out for which they have subscribed. Thus, for instance—C. Parker's, 52, means, that C. Parker's time is out with number fifty-two; or J. Brown, 52, indicates that J. Brown's time is out with number fifty-two.

Subscribers, therefore, will oblige us by renewing their subscription before their time is out, so as to have no break in the continuation of their papers. We always, without further notice, discontinue the paper when the subscriber's time, for which he has paid, is up.

TO OUR FRIENDS.

We intend to add not less than one hundred thousand subscribers to our present large list during the year 1878. This, with a little aid from our troops of friends, can easily be done. Let all such bring the merits of the Home Circle before their friends who are not subscribers. Let one-third of our present subscribers each send us one new one, and the work is done. Will they not do it? Our terms to clubs are exceedingly liberal, more so than any other paper.

◆

If our friends, the readers of the Home Circle, only knew what a treat we have in store for them, beginning with the new year, we are sure that, one and all, in renewing their subscription for 1878, would endeavor to have some of their friends join them to form a club, or at least send an additional name with their own.

◆

Winter begins Dec. 21, 1877, at 11.42 A. M., and lasts 89 days, 0 hours, and 52 minutes.

Our New Paper.
"GLEASON'S WEEKLY PICTORIAL."

Again we greet another year
In unpretentious rhymes;
But with a paper that will cheer
Our friends in many climes!

A bright new paper which we call
"Gleason's Pictorial." One
Containing beautiful things for all—
Of papers the paragon!

Its weekly visits, like a friend,
Will please the heart and mind;
And rays of sunlight it will send
To homes of every kind.

So full of good things it will be
We can not now explain;
But for a moment one may see
Some things it will contain:

Sixteen fine octavo pages,
Handsome print to please the eye;
Prettiest paper of the ages,
Not a one should pass it by!

Engravings from the best of hands,
Pictures of cities o'er the seas;
Scenes of beauty in foreign lands,
Gems of our country's scenery.

Columns of wit for young and old,
Sparkling, racy, rich; but pure!
Sayings wise of sages cold,
Aphorisms that will endure!

Thrilling Stories of land and sea,
Written by authors known to fame;
Poems of beautiful imagery,
Gems from poets of deathless name.

And the language of all the flow'rs,
Something to keep for time to come,
Games proposed for winter hours,
Games that help to brighten home!

Salient hints on Health and Beauty,
How to keep them from decay;
Showing to ourselves our duty,
Sadly neglected every day!

Perfect ettiquette for all,
How in life to fill your station;
Hints on dinners, parties, balls,
Letters, notes, and conversation!

Everything that one should know
Touching social ettiquette;
Something that the bells and beaux,
Well should learn and not forget.

Ettiquette of love and courtship,
All about the wedding days;
Hints of flirting, Cupid's sportship,
And 'twill tell if marriage pays!

All who seek for information
Of the mysteries of the heart,
Here will find it in its station,
Here will learn the living art!

Hattie Hateful's funny flashes,
Every week will bring delight;
And Hope Holly's mad pen's dashes
Will make bright the winter night.

All the year our readers smiling,
Will no words of anger speak;
Clara Augusta's pen beguiling
Them with humor every week.

Such a trio sparkling, peerless,
On our paper ne'er are seen;
Home with them will not be cheerless,
Laugh and life will e'er be green.

And in *number One* you'll find,
Lieutenant King's Prize Puzzle hard;
Over it to rack the mind,
And Perhaps, gain the reward.

'Tis a puzzle wondrous pretty,
From the depths of puzzle-land;
'Tis a picture very witty,
Made by master brains and hands.

To the one who finds the key
We a fine reward will give;
Something that will treasured be
While the lucky winner lives.

Many things we have not mentioned
In the paper will be found;
Every one will please the reader,
To delight him we are bound.

Every home we want to brighten,
With our matchless paper new;
Every heart we want to lighten,
O! that every person knew!

Two dollars for an entire year,
The "Pictorial" will obtain;
Send in your names, and it will cheer
Your minds with golden grains.

On Christmas Day with number One
We'll open many eyes;
Tho' we have told you one and all,
Prepare for a surprise!

DELIGHTS OF MARRIED LIFE.

Behold him! all the while he is busied about daily occupation, his thoughts are wandering towards the time of going "home" in the evening, after the fatigues and toils of the day. He knows that, on his return, he shall find an affectionate face to welcome him—a warm, snug room, a bright fire, a clean hearth, the tea-things laid, the sofa wheeled round on the rug—and, in a few minutes after his entrance, his wife sitting by his side, consoling him in his vexations, aiding him in his plans for the future, or participating in his joys, and smiling upon him for the good news he may have brought home; his children climbing on the cushion at his feet, leaning over his knees with joyous eagerness that they may coaxingly win him. This is the acme of happiness!

HOLIDAY PRESENTS.

Please remember, in selecting your holiday presents, that nothing could be prettier than some of our Chromos—either a lot of the small, or one or more of the large ones. A year's subscription to the Pictorial, Home Circle or Monthly Companion would also make a valuable New Year's present.

◆

A school board inspector asked a small pupil of what the surface of the earth consists, and was promptly answered: "Land and water." He varied the question slightly, that the fact might be impressed on the boy's mind, and asked: "What, then, do land and water make?" To which came the immediate response: "Mud."

THE MONTHLY COMPANION FOR 1878.

The Magazine for 1878 will be greatly improved. Each number will contain numerous fine engravings, and will be printed on a better paper, with new type. In fact, there will be a complete change for the better throughout.

M. T. Caldor's Best Story!
To be Commenced Next Week!

In proof of our determination to make the Home Circle more than ever deserving of its immense popularity, we shall open the new volume with a fresh serial from the pen of the above-named contributor, entitled:

GOLDEN FAVORS;
or,
THE FALSE HEIRESS.
By M. T. Caldor.

It is, in our opinion, the very best story this author has yet written. Being a true American novel, it is especially adapted to

PLEASE AMERICAN READERS,

while it combines such originality of plot, and strength of detail, as are not to be found in the sensational rehash which other journals force upon their readers. In

GOLDEN FAVORS

We have a romance of such absorbing interest that it cannot fail of becoming popular. There is just enough mystery in the plot to make it doubly attractive, and the characters are all well chosen and cleverly sustained. Hal Halstead and Nannie O'Brien are persons that we love in spite of ourselves, while the old, placid beauty,

EVANGELINE EARLE,

is a powerful creation, drawn from real life. Then we have the pompous Mr. Theodore Earle, and the sentimental Mrs. Seraphina, and a host of others that are depicted in this favorite author's happiest style.

We wish to impress upon our readers that we are making

GREAT PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR!

and that we shall spare no pains or expense to make the Home Circle a welcome visitor in every home circle in the land. We have made arrangements with several of the

Most Popular Story-Writers

of the day, to supply us with the best products of their pens during 1878, and have also retained all of our old contributors.

No paper in the United States has received more encouragement from the press and the reading public than the Home Circle, and it is owing to this encouragement that we are now resolved to make it the

Prince of Literary Journals.

How far we may succeed in this we leave our friends to judge, only asking them to read M. T. Caldor's latest and greatest story.

"A MERRY CHRISTMAS."

Yes, and a happy new year to all! In one joyous season our hearts open to every one of God's creatures, and they seem bound to us by invisible chains of love. Especially do we remember the little ones, who, so young, care-free and glad, and knowing nothing of life's dark side, now dream joyously of holidays, sumptuous dinners, nuts, raisins, candy, and, more glorious than all, the treas[illegible] Christmas tree. These Christmas tree[illegible]derful affairs, and one should be set up in [illegible]ousehold where there are children. Let [illegible]ll, even to the youngest, contribute someth[illegible]s decoration. Nothing is more productive of [illegible] feeling in families than this yearly exchange of gifts. Then, when the last article is contributed, and safe in mamma's possession, the tree [illegible]f must be procured. In large cities any kind can be secured; but in a village you will be forced to take what you can get. If you go to the woods the common spruce is the most suitable. If you live in the Southern States, a small pine of the dwarf variety which grows up in old fields or on waste lands is best for the purpose. If the limbs of your tree are too flexible to bear the weight of the decorations which you intend to put on it, nail thin slats or laths across the stem under the branches, to support them, and paint them green or brown, as is most convenient. If the tree is not perfect in shape, nail on here and there an extra branch to make it so. Take a small round tub or half of a cask, place your tree in the centre and brace it firmly, and fill the cask with sand. Cover the cask, sand and all, with green moss from the woods. If you cannot get moss, use little bra[illegible]s of spruce, hemlock, or pine, whatever your [illegible]e is. When your tree is firmly placed, and c[illegible]d wax tapers fastened on the branches either [illegible] wire or melted wax, begin hanging the presents and ornaments, commencing with the top branches, using ribbons, wires, and threads for the purpose. A great many cheap ornaments of gold and silver paper, such as stars, fishes, horns, crescents, birds and animals, are sold very cheap at the fancy stores for the purpose. Bright pieces of tin, little mirrors, fancy balls of metallic lustre of various colors, can also be bought, but when this cannot be afforded, very pretty ornaments may be manufactured at home. We will mention a few of these. Gilded and silver balls may be made by pasting gold or silver paper over apples and English walnuts. Drive little tacks into the walnuts to tie them by to the tree. The apples may be tied by their stems, and the oranges can be suspended by tying a coarse thread around them so tight as to bury it in the rind. Very coarse lace and tarlatan bags can be run up and filled with candies and popped corn. Birds' nests can be made of egg-shell surrounded with moss. Take half of a s[illegible] it in some paste or the white of an egg, make a hollow of moss in your hand, and put the half shell in it, line the shell with cotton wool or silk ravellings, and put in small oblong sugar plums or colored beans for eggs; stick these in the branches of your tree. Cups, pitchers and basins may also be made from egg-shells. Make the handles, rims and bottoms of gold and silver paper, fastened on with paste, and ornament with little pictures and bits of gold paper pasted on them. Strings of pop corn and chains of gold paper add to the brilliancy and beauty of the tree. Children like fairies, and they can be made of little cheap, jointed dolls, dressed in lace, gauze, or tarlatan, or even in tissue paper pasted together to make the dresses and to form the wings, and flecked over with dots and strips of gold or silver paper. To fasten the fairies on the tree, take long pieces of wire, wind them around the waists of the fairies and then to the tree, and they will look as if they were flying. Most of the presents may be made at home, also. When affection dictates your gifts to each other, their value is greatly enhanced to the recipient, even though their cost is little.

◆

A Western man took advantage of his wife's having small-pox to send for his mother-in-law. There proved to be small-pox enough for both!

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT:
or,
THE INFLUENCE OF A SISTER.

"I HAVE a Christmas gift to offer you, William," said Susan Gray the other day, to her brother, who sat beside her around the blazing fire of her own apartment. It was Christmas morning, and William Gray, with a few young friends, had been drinking, as is too often the case on that day, from a large bowl of "egg-nog," and all of them felt more or less its influence. The young men who had spent the night with William, were just then gone, and he had sought his sister's room to have an hour's chat with her before he left home to join them again in a drinking party which had been arranged for the evening. He had been chatting away very gaily with his sister, till the hour for his departure had nearly arrived, and he rose from his seat when Susan addressed him as I said above. "I have a Christmas gift to offer you, and I desire you to prize it as its value deserves."

"What is it, pray, that you recommend so highly? a lock of your hair, I dare say, to wear round my arm, or one of your old necklaces as a substitute for a cravat; or perhaps a kiss, or in short, what is it? Let me have it, for I must away to the boys, else they will accuse me of laziness and inattention, and the Lord knows what beside. Come, fix it on me, and let me be going."

"But will you accept it?" inquired Susan, smiling playfully, "and will you preserve it and regard it as it should be regarded?"

"Why, yes, certainly, I will. I never slight any of your presents, do I? I have the ring you gave me last Christmas, and the book you gave me on New Year's day, and all your gifts, as good and beautiful as when you first gave them."

"Ah, but this one I am going to offer you now is different from all these, and far more worthy your attention. It will last you all your life, and do you good to the latest hour of your existence. Again I ask you, will you accept it and treasure it up in your heart as it deserves?" And she grew more thoughtful as she spoke.

"Why, again I say, yes, you scrupulous, doubting creature. Why should you suppose that I will treat a gift from you with less attention than it deserves?

"Because this one is designed to take away from you what you have heretofore considered an innocent pleasure, but which is in reality, a dangerous and vicious habit. Here it is, and may you remember your promise to regard its value as it deserves." So saying, she handed him a little pocket Bible, and again urged him to observe *all* that was in it.

"How beautiful!" said William, turning over the leaves, and admiring the excellent precepts and fine execution of the book, as they met his eye. "But what is this?" he exclaimed, as a small scrip of paper fell from between the leaves to the floor.

Before he could reach it, Susan snatched it from where it lay, and pinned it to his bosom; then smiling sweetly in his face, while a teardrop glistened in her eye, she tripped out of the room and left him alone.

He took the paper from his bosom, and read with surprise and attention its contents; it was the *Temperance Pledge*.

"What can Susan mean by this?" thought William, as he again read the paper. "Does she really imagine that what little I drink is doing me an injury, or does she fear that the habit will increase upon me as it does upon others? She certainly does not desire me to subscribe my name to this *now*, since I have agreed to meet my friends at a wine party this evening; what would *they say* to me if I were to do such a thing? But then, what will *she think* of me if I do not? Will she not conclude that I prize their opinions and feelings above hers? She is the kindest, sweetest creature in the world, and I am almost inclined to sign this pledge."

At this moment Susan came into the room, and William asked her if she would have him fail to attend the party to which he was promised in the evening.

"By no means in the world," answered his sister; "I desire you to go, and wear this pledge on your bosom as your badge."

"What an odd idea you have stumbled on! What would the boys think of me, and what could I say to them?"

"Why, if they are men of sense, they will think you have put on a noble, honorable badge; and you may say that Susan Gray presented it as a Christmas gift to her brother."

It was some time before William could be brought to yield his consent; but at length he subscribed his name in full, bold letters to the pledge, and suffered it to be again pinned to his bosom. In this way he rode to the evening party, and found his young friends waiting for his arrival.

I shall not pretend to relate what took place between them in the way of inquiry and explanation; this would be making a long story of a short one. Suffice it to say, that William drank no wine, and his presence kept down all excess among his friends. They knew him to be a man of sense and honor, and they respected his opinions and his feelings.

One of the young men, who was particularly attached to William, and still more to his sister, voluntarily added his name to that of his friend, and put on a similar badge. It is mischievously whispered among the neighbors that this young man and the lovely Susan have for some time past been pledged to each other in another way, and that they are soon to unite in a new society.

This is the most sensible *yarn* I have ever *spun*, and I think it is because I had nothing but *facts* for the *thread*. I'll try again some day.

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Home Circle.—Published by F. Gleason, at 738 Washington St., Boston. Terms $2.00 per year, postage free. We know of no paper of its class which we can so heartily recommend to every one for its excellence and high-toned character. Its stories are moral, and by the best writers, while its editorials and other articles give abundant room for thought and reflection to the reader. The fact that Mr. Gleason is the editor is of itself enough to recommend it everywhere.—*Herald, Mount Joy, Pa.*

◆

The best way to send money to us, is to procure a Post Office money order; where that cannot be had, a draft payable to our order either in Boston, or New York will do. If neither can be had, then get your letters registered—every postmaster is obliged to do this. Never send us bank-checks, for we cannot collect them out of Boston, nor send by express, unless you pay the express charges.

◆

A lad, arrested for theft, when taken before the magistrate and asked what his occupation was, frankly answered, "Stealing." "Your candor astonishes me," said the judge. "I thought it would," replied the lad, "seeing how many big ones there are in the same business, as is ashamed to own it."

Weekly Melange.

The Pope may hold out for ten years yet. He is only eighty-six, and his two brothers lived to be ninety-five and ninety-six respectfully.

Flowers are now nearly discarded at fashionable funerals in New York. The floral mania has been carried so far that much display is considerored vulgar.

A man over in East Boston makes a regular business of kindling his fire every morning with kerosene. If his wife's father owed a whole graveyard, he couldn't be more reckless.

Tommy, a conscientious boy, has been told that he must remain perfectly still as his mamma wants to take a nap—Tommy (in the middle of the nap): Mamma! Mamma! What shall I do? I want to cough!

In one of the towns in Northern Worcester county, whenever the young fellows wish to take their girls to ride the mothers of the girls charge ten cents for the privilege, which goes to help pay the minister's salary.

"The *Balkan* range!" exclaimed an old housekeeper. "The Balkan *range!* It seems them Rooshuns have a great deal of trouble a-cookin' of their turkies on that Balkan Range. It strikes *me* it's time they tried some other patent!"

"Papa," said a bright Springfield boy just home from a slight-of-hand entertainment, "I wish I was a conjurer." "Why, my son?" "I would turn you into a rat, call up the cat, and wouldn't I have fun!"

Friend, brother, when you see a soul battling with temptation, struggling under the cross, rushing forward to rescue dying men, and yet faltering in an hour of weakness or a moment of peril, then cheer him! And as a pebble's fall may change a river's course, so your words of sympathetic kindness may uplift a drooping heart, and fix its faltering purpose for a noble life.

A little baby stranger came to a family in Agusta last week, and a bright five-year-old brother, who had been heretofore the only child in that household, was brought to see the new comer. He greeted the little one with apparent pleasure and delight, patting it playfully under the chin and smoothing down its soft hair. Then all at once came the inquiry, "Say, how was God when you left?"

He was creeping softly along the bedroom floor, on his hands and knees, and was feeling tenderly under the drawers for something he had hidden there the evening before; but his wife woke and said, "Peter, what under the heavings are you doing?"—"Dear," said he, "I am walking in my sleep, and dreaming that I am picking water-lilies from the soft, blue bosom of the lake." How to get that flask out of there before she got up the next morning was what worried him more than the water-lilies did.

A young fop who had just begun to shave for a beard, stepped into a barber-shop, and after a grand swagger, desired to be shaved. The barber went through the usual movements, and the sprig jumped up with a flourish, exclaiming:

"My foin fellow, what is the charge?"

"Oh, no charge," replied the barber.

"No charge! How's that?"

"Why, I'm always thankful when I can get a soft calf-skin to sharpen my razor on."

A sturdy vagabond, with full black beard of unusual length, was recently brought before a London magistrate, who questioned him about his past life. "If one can believe all that is laid to your charge," said the Judge, solemnly, "your conscience must be as black as your beard." "Ah," replied the wily rogue, "if a man's conscience is to be measured by his beard, then your Lordship has no conscience at all."

The man who does nothing don't amount to much. It makes but little difference whether he is a millionaire or pauper. He is only a stagnant pool, without energy enough to start a ripple. He diffuses a moral miasma over everything around him. Do something; don't stand on the corner gaping, with your hands in your pocket, like an idiot. The world was made to work in, and if you fill your hearts with good angels, the bad spirits will keep out because there is no room for them.

The other evening, when she had company, and her six-year old son made himself disagreeably conspicuous, she gave him a threatening look, and silently warned him to leave the room. Instead of obeying, he walked up to one of the ladies, and inquired, "Misses, can't you stay here all night?"—"Why, what do you mean?" she asked, in a tone of surprise.—"If you'll stay, mother wont dare to beat me; if you don't stay she'll make me hop."—It was affecting to see his mother lift him to her knee, kiss him repeatedly, and blandly inform the ladies that it was only his funny way.

Gems of Thought.

It usually falls out that those who seek others' destruction find their own.

Waste of wealth is sometimes retrieved; waste of health, seldom; waste of time, never.

A false friend is like a shadow on a dial, it appears in clear weather, but vanishes as soon as it is cloudy.

If the storm of adversity whistles around you, whistle as bravely yourself; perhaps the two whistles may make melody.

Man wastes his mornings in anticipating his afternoons, and wastes his afternoons in regretting his mornings.

We have seen a prudent, industrious wife retrieve the fortunes of a family, when her husband pulled at the other end of the rope.

We love much more warmly by cherishing the intention of giving pleasure, than an hour afterwards when we have given it.

When doing what is right, the heart is easy, and becomes better every day; but when practising deceit, the mind labors, and every day gets worse.

If you wish success in life, make perseverance your bosom friend, experience your wise counsellor, caution your elder brother, and hope your guardian genius.

Our notions of life are much the same as they are about travelling—there is a good deal of amusement on the road, but, after all, one wants to be at rest.

Kind words are among the brightest flowers of earth; they convert the humblest home into a paradise; therefore use them, especially around the fireside circle.

None of us wish to exchange our identity for that of another; yet we are never satisfied with ourselves. The unknown has a charm, and unless blinded by vanity, we know ourselves too well to appreciate our especial characteristics at a very high rate.

THE ITALIAN EXILE.

By Dr. George F. Brooks.

When the minstrel is sorrowful, sad is the lay—
You may smile on his song, but his soul is away;
For no theme can excite this cold fancy of mine,
So far from the land of the Olive and Vine.

There passion breathes out from the lyre and the lute,
And the voice of their melody never is mute;
Love stamps on the forehead of Beauty its seal,
On cheeks that can burn and on hearts that can feel.

Years vanish—their trace on my brow you behold,
And my heart has to beauty grown careless and cold;
Yes of all sweet impressions that linger there yet,
The daughters of Florence it last will forget.

Ye Pilgrims of Beauty, from barbarous lands,
Behold where the model of loveliness stands;
Go, kneel by the marble, if marble it seem,
And Love, with its torch, will illumine your dream.

Lost thoughts of your youth will that statue renew;
You will muse on the home of the faithful and true,
Where never can come disappointment or care,
And the beings are pure as that image is fair.

Italy! Italy! never again
May the minstrel revisit thy mountain and plain,
Yet a vision of bliss on his slumber there breaks,
But to dream of thy shores, though an exile, he wakes.

Thy present is beautiful! great was thy past;
May the future restore thee to greatness at last!
The home of my fathers! the land of the sun!
Honored though distant, and dear though undone.

* * *

AFTER ALL;

OR,

THE QUEEN OF THE BALLET.

By George W. Gleason.

CHAPTER I.

REVELATIONS.

LITTLE May Meredith *was* beautiful—beautiful as a dream—yet it was more the beauty of a tender, loving child than of a girl who had entered her sixteenth summer. Petite in form, fairy and sylph-like, with eyes as blue as dew-wet morning-glories, and a complexion as pure and delicate as the petals of a tea-rose, with masses of golden hair—warm Saxon gold—showering upon her shoulders like a torrent of sunshine, she was a creature to call forth the loving protection of every kind heart.

Very fair and fragile she looked this evening as she sat by the open window at Wildwood Park, gazing dreamily out upon the garden where the dusk of twilight was beginning to enshroud the flowers. The laces of her white dress made a delicate tracery about her milky throat and over the dazzling hands, which lay crossed upon the sill.

May was happy this evening. Everybody was so good to her, she thought, and nobody ever reminded her of her dependence on others for the comforts and blessings she was permitted to enjoy in this world. She had been an orphan for five years, but Heaven had been kind to her in her affliction. Since the death of her parents her home had been at Wildwood Park, with good Mr. Courtney, who had duly installed her as the fairy mistress of his home, and kept her in that position, until he, too, laid down life's burden and went to rest in the village church-yard. But his death had not made her friendless, widower though he was. His son Royal—a young man just out of college—was as kind to her as his father had ever been; and although he was a little wild as yet, and liked to have his boon companions spend weeks at Wildwood, he never forgot to treat May with the consideration of a brother.

Royal Courtney was a noble-hearted man, inheriting his father's best traits of character. He was only twenty-two at the time of our story, but the chrysalis of boyhood had been dropped with his school-days, and he had developed at once into an honest, honorable man. If May deemed herself fortunate in her friends, she considered that she was especially favored in her young guardian. He was perfect in her eyes. She saw in him all the elements of a manly heroism—every grand and noble trait that could be desired in a friend, a protector, or a brother. She did not dream that she was learning the lesson of love. She was too young, too inexperienced, to understand the warning of her heart when it tried to tell her that this man was becoming as necessary to her life as the air she breathed.

The awakening was a dreadful one to her.

It came on this quiet, balmy evening as she sat by the window watching the twilight shadows deepening in the garden. Two men were coming slowly up the walk. One of them was Royal Courtney: the other a college friend who had been his guest for some days.

They had been strolling about the grounds, and were now returning to the house. The fire on their cigars glowed brightly in the gathering gloom, and May drew back in the shadow of the curtains, that they might not see her and relinquish their smoking. They came up the piazza steps and stopped directly in front of the window where she sat. Standing there with their backs toward her, they continued their conversation in audible tones.

May was about to withdraw out of hearing-distance, when she heard a remark that chained her to the spot.

"Oh, you mean my little ward, May Meredith?" said Royal, in his rich, musical voice. "Why, she is to be my wife, you know."

"Are you serious?" asked his companion.

"Never more so, I assure you."

"But she is only a child!"

"She is sixteen. I am to wait until she is eighteen."

"And do you really love her?"

"No."

"Whe-e-ew! Here is an enigma! Can't you explain, old fellow?"

There was a momentary silence, during which Royal puffed vigorously at his cigar. Then he answered, in a rather uncertain tone of voice:

"You have been my confidant so long, Ned, that I cannot well refuse. Besides, I have already told so much that I will have to tell the rest in order to make you understand the importance of secrecy. You promise to keep mum?"

"Faithfully."

"You have heard me say, I presume, that May's father and mine were very close friends. I doubt if Damon and Pythias were more thoroughly attached to each other. One of the whims that sprung from their intimacy was to bring their families more closely together by the marriage of their children. Consequently, as soon as little May was born (I being at that time six years old), they resorted to that romantic and barbarous custom of betrothing us in our cradles, as it were. Mr. Meredith died very poor, and his daughter came to live with us. My father doted on her. He could scarcely have been more fond of her had she been his own daughter, and his last words to me, as he lay on his dying bed, were an injunction to marry her as soon as she was eighteen. It was his pet hobby, and I could do nothing else but promise."

"And do you feel it your duty to keep that promise?"

"I do certainly," was the firm reply. "My father's dying request is sacred, and my last promise to him shall be sacredly fulfilled. I like May very much—everybody likes her—but I do not think I can ever love her as a man should love the wife of his bosom. You know what I might aspire to, Ned, if I were not tied down by this agreement. Nevertheless, I shall not attempt to shirk my duty, but will make her happiness the one object of my life, and will never let her know by word or action that my heart is not entirely her own. Poor thing! I believe it would kill her to find out that it was all a cruel deception."

"But perhaps she does not love you—perhaps she will not consent to the marriage?"

"When I tell her of the agreement her duty will be clear. But are you in earnest, Ned? Do you really think she does not love me?"

"No! It was an idle suggestion. I have found myself watching her for a couple of days, and my decision is that she worships the very ground you walk upon. Poor child!"

"'Sh! Let us move to the other end of the piazza. I would not have her hear for the world!"

But it was too late to avert the blow.

Already a little white-robed figure, without a cry, a moan, or a murmur, had slipped out of its velvet-cushioned chair and lay prone upon the carpet, as still and motionless as a corpse. The lace curtains swept softly over it as the night-wind gently swayed them, and the moonlight glancing in through the casement fell upon a white, marble-face, framed in a cloud of golden hair.

And nobody saw—nobody knew. The old housekeeper passed through the room twice—the young men sauntered up and down the piazza, talking and smoking—but the secret of the recessed window was not discovered. And when, a half-hour later, that same little white-robed figure groped its way out into the hall, and up the stairs to its own room, still nobody saw—nobody knew.

But Royal Courtney saw and knew all at a late hour on the following morning, as he stood in the breakfast-room staring like a madman at the remarkable letter he had just read—the letter which had been found in May Meredith's room, and which ran as follows:

"MR. COURTNEY:—This is to bid you and Wildwood Park a last farewell. I was so unfortunate or, rather, so *fortunate*—as to overhear the conversation between you and your friend on the piazza, this evening, and I decided that my only wise course was to leave at once and forever the place I have loved to call my home. I hope you will forgive me if I act contrary to your wishes in this; I feel that it would be very ungrateful and selfish in me to do otherwise. You have been a very kind friend to me; I can never forget that. I would not cause you one pang of regret—I would not be the means of defeating a single hope of yours—and it is to further your chances of happiness that I now withdraw from your sight. Pray, do not let your mistaken sense of duty prompt you to institute a search for me. I can never return to Wildwood; I can never, *never* be your wife, knowing what I do; so let your conscience be at rest, and marry whom you please. God bless you! Good-by!

"MAY."

And Royal Courtney, after reading it three times over without moving from his tracks, still stood there pale as a ghost, stunned and stupefied by the awful blow. Could he believe his senses? Could this be little May—the gentle, childlike, dependent creature who had been left to his care and protection—could it be she who had taken this venturesome, self-reliant step?

Yes, she was gone—no one knew whither? Her pretty rooms were deserted, her snowy couch untouched. She had fled in the night, leaving no trace of her flight—leaving no clue save that hastily-written, ominous note. Gone! Royal fairly gasped now, as the word in its true significance flashed through his bewildered brain. Gone! Yes, and the sunshine of Wildwood Park had gone with her.

He blamed himself bitterly, heaped reproaches upon his own head with relentless zeal, and seemed to take a grim delight in abusing himself. And, in the midst of it all, there came a startling revelation to his soul. He began to realize what he had lost. He began to wonder how he could ever have imagined for an instant that he did not love her! For he did! He knew it now—knew it with a suddenness, a firmness of conviction, that almost overpowered him, strong man as he was. But it was too late—too late!

A search was instituted—a thorough, vigorous search—but in vain. No means were left untried, no expense was spared, to discover the whereabouts of the missing girl; but every effort failed. Her flight was strangely successful; her retreat most perfectly covered. Royal had not expected this. Timid child as she was, unused to the great world and its people, he had thought her capture would be easy, and had only despaired of being able to convince her of his love when found. But the truth became more palpable every day: she was gone—truly, mysteriously, irrecoverably gone!

Then, as days glided into weeks, and weeks lengthened into months, a sad, despirited man, took up his life-burden at Wildwood Park.

CHAPTER II.

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

ONE year dragged its weary length into the past; then Royal Courtney began to travel. He had not thought of it until his physician had advised him to go abroad for his health, taking him severely to task for keeping himself shut up in the solitude of his library, to the detriment of his vitality. And, like a great, docile child, he had listened meekly to the doctor's words, and said to himself:

"Why not? In new scenes and new faces I may possibly find that which I have failed to find in the study of my books—forgetfulness."

So he went to Europe, and did the Continent pretty thoroughly, bringing up at last in an old Italian city, where we find him enjoying a few weeks of quietude after his aimless perambulations.

At the hotel where he was taking his rest he formed the acquaintance of an English tourist, named Sir Charles Everleigh, a very sociable and agreeable gentleman whose companionship afforded him much pleasure. The two were soon on the friendliest terms, and were almost constantly together, whether viewing the sights of the ancient city, strolling in the wonderful gardens, or lounging in the hotel parlors.

"We will go to the theatre to-night, if you have no objections?" said Sir Charles one evening, as they puffed their after-dinner cigars.

"No objections whatever," replied Royal, indolently. "But, really, these Italian theatres can only prove a bore to me. I am not 'up' in the language, as you are."

"Italian! My dear fellow, I refer to the English theatre."

"Is there such an one here?"

"Yes, indeed; I thought you knew. No doubt you will meet Americans there. I have already secured the necessary pasteboards, and there is nothing left for us to do but to [illegible] and take our seats."

So they went to the theatre, and occupied the pit stalls which Sir Charles had secured in advance. It promised to be a dull evening for Royal, as he was in no mood to relish a play of any kind, but being somewhat awe-stricken by the music, he gave himself up to the glorious orchestration.

As the play advanced (it was an old-time English melodrama), Sir Charles whispered in his companion's ear:

"The ballet will come on in a few moments. I am anxious for you to see the fair dancers—especially the leader, who is positively the most angelic creature I ever saw!"

Courtney smiled, abstractedly.

"These actresses have a knack of appearing to advantage on the stage," he said.

"Yes, but I have seen her both off and on, and can swear there is no deception. She's a regular little fairy. These dark-skinned Italians go wild over her blonde beauty, which is indeed ravishing. She is popularly styled the Queen of the Ballet."

"What is her name?"

"Mademoiselle Eulalie St. Jean. At least that is her stage name, but it is doubtless a fictitious one, for she is not French. Any one can see at a glance that she is an English girl—or perhaps an American."

"Quite young, I presume?"

"She does not look above fifteen, though they say she is older. Nobles bow in humble adoration at her shrine; raw lads squander their money for diamond rings, which they conceal in bouquets and hurl at her feet. She captivates old and young alike. Hush! There she is!"

At that moment the curtain rose on a new act, disclosing a bevy of fairy-like creatures dancing the graceful ballet.

"There she is!" whispered Sir Charles; "the one nearest the footlights—the queen—the blonde beauty—do you see her?"

Did he see her? Had he seen a veritable ghost the color could not have fled from his cheeks and lips more suddenly. He not only saw, but recognized her the very moment she burst upon his startled vision, and his heart seemed to stand still as he stupidly watched her gliding and pirouetting in the mazes of the sprightly dance, her airy dress setting off her petite form to a charm, her blue eyes sparkling, her fair face glowing, her rich hair tumbling in golden ripples about her white shoulders. Mademoiselle Eulalie St. Jean, the Queen of the Ballet! Why, it was no other than little May Meredith, his long-lost *protege*—the one being in all the world whom he loved! He had hunted her so long in vain, and here she was in a foreign land, dancing on the stage—rising before him like a shadow from the past—appearing so suddenly to his unprepared gaze that for a minute he was deprived of the power of action.

"Do you see her?" repeated Sir Charles, not noticing his companion's agitation.

"Yes, I see her," replied Royal, with forced calmness.

"Pretty, is she not?"

"Very pretty, indeed!"

The ballet ended, and the fairy troupe whirled gracefully off the stage, amid the thunderous applause of an enraptured audience.

The applause was kept up long and loud.

"An encore," said Sir Charles. "They are calling Eulalie back; they always do it. She is an excellent singer, and they never let her off without a song."

He was right. In a few moments she came on the stage alone, and the triumphant crowd greeted her with a wild uproar. She came down to the footlights with a pretty bow, and stood waiting for the noise to subside. Other actors and actresses came on, and ranged themselves in a group behind her, to swell the chorus of her song.

She began to sing a quaint American ballad, her pure, sweet voice rising like seraphic music on the charmed air. But all of a sudden she broke down. Her dilated eyes became fixed upon something in the audience; she started violently, threw out her hands like a blind person groping in the dark, and fell back in a dead swoon!

In an instant all was confusion. The excited audience began to rise, and the actors sprang forward in consternation. One of the latter, bending over the insensible ballet-girl, endeavored to raise her up. Her head, with its cloud of golden hair sweeping about it, fell over on her shoulders as if she were dead.

SEE ENGRAVING.

"It was the sight of *me* that caused her to faint!" said Royal Courtney, in a hoarse whisper close to his friend's ear. "She is a friend of mine. This is her last night in a theatre! Go to the hotel—I will meet you there in half an hour."

Before the amazed Englishman could utter a word of reply, the young American strode away. He saw him leap upon the stage, and rush after those who were bearing the ballet-girl behind the scenes, and then, wondering if his friend had gone crazy over a pretty face, he betook himself from the hall.

Royal stepped in among the astonished actors, and deliberately took the insensible form of May Meredith from the arms of the man who was carrying her to the green-room.

"Let me have her! She is mine!" he panted, as he gathered her in his own arms and held her close to his throbbing bosom.

"Who are you?" gasped the man, staring at him.

"No matter!" was the stern response; "I am this lady's rightful protector. Let me pass!"

"Fool! Madman! What bold trick is this?" cried another actor, stepping in front of him. "Put down the girl, sir!"

Royal's eyes blazed.

"Stand aside!" he commanded, in a voice full of smothered rage. "Stand aside, man, or I will walk over your corpse! She is *mine*, I tell you, and she will tell you the same thing to-morrow!"

His threat was too ominous to be disregarded. The man hastily got out of his way, and he was permitted to pass on without further molestation.

He left the building by a private exit in the rear of the stage. Carriages were waiting outside. Entering one of these with his fair burden, which he still kept hugged up close to his heart, he instructed the driver to drive with all haste to the hotel. By the time they reached their destination the girl had recovered consciousness, and was gazing about her in a bewildered, awe-struck way. Royal did not speak to her as yet, but he helped her out of the carriage as tenderly as if she were a child, and supported her with his strong arm as he led her into the hotel, and up to his own cozy parlor.

Then, as soon as May began to realize the whole truth, she threw herself sobbing on the sofa; and Royal knelt beside her, and gently pushed the golden locks away from her pale, tearful face as he said:

"May, I hope those are not tears of disappointment. I have searched for you so long—I have been so lonely, so miserable, without you, and am so happy now that Heaven has thrown you in my way, that I can't bear the thought of losing you again. May, darling, I love you—I love you!"

She started up and gazed at him with a flash of resentment in her eyes.

"Pray, do not misunderstand me!" he hastened to add. "I have not forgotten what you heard me say that evening at Wildwood; I have not forgotten that my own thoughtless words were the cause of your flight, and I have abused myself unmercifully for it. But I have read my heart since then. It became an open book to me as soon as you were gone, and I realized for the first time that I loved *you*, and you alone."

The resentment in the blue eyes melted into blank amazement, but the lips were silent.

"I cannot live without you, May," he continued, "and I don't intend to try it again. The last year at home was the most miserable of my life. Say that you will forgive me, May—say that you will be my wife, and try to love me, and make the old home what it used to be, only a thousand times brighter and happier!"

She looked at him again, and knew that he was speaking from the depths of his heart. Then she succumbed all of a sudden.

"Oh, Royal, I have always loved you ever since I—Always! always! Are you sure you care for me? If I am poor, and nobody——"

He kissed the words from her lips.

"You are my own darling! My sweet, pure, priceless treasure—doubly dear since you have been lost and found!"

And he held her tight in his arms, as if fearful that she would escape again.

Of course Royal Courtney did not tarry long in Europe after that. With May Meredith he went back to America and Wildwood Park, and there they have remained ever since, basking in the sunshine of mutual love and sympathy.

So the stern decree of their respective parents was carried out to the letter, AFTER ALL.

* * *

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2. Christ Blessing Little Children.
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4. Raising of Jairus's Daughter.
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FLORAL MOTTO CROSSES.

41. Nearer My God to Thee.
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"Well, sir," replied the lady, "I do not know any one better qualified to judge of the subject than yourself."

The fellow accepted the remark as a compliment to his superior discernment, and smiled his grateful acknowledgements.

* * *

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* * *

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THE MISSING PACKAGE;

OR, THE

FEUD OF FENWICKE FEN.

By M. T. Caldor.

[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER VIII.

Luke Fenwicke grew purple with horror and rage. He lifted up his hands threateningly and advanced toward Cuthbert Neil, who stood like a statue of white despair, looking imploringly into Flora's anguished face.

"What have you to say? what have you to say?" demanded he, his voice quivering, his spare frame shaking as with palsy. "Villain, coward, traitor, what have you to say?"

"That all your epithets belong to him," cried the young man, fiercely shaking his clenched fist toward the coolly tranquil Frenchman.

"*Mon Dieu!* what means the youth?" ejaculated monsieur with a low laugh; "what have I said? what have I done? I tell you my little discovery and you fly upon me in this way! Do you mean to imply that I am Eric Osborne's son? Parbleau! there is a witness which cannot lie."

He pointed to the portrait of Eric Osborne, and back to the young man's countenance, an almost perfect transcript of the same.

A low sob broke from Flora.

Cuthbert made a frantic movement toward her, and then paused, wringing his hands in impotent wrath and anguish.

"What have you to say?" thundered Luke Fenwicke.

"That you misjudge me sorely; that circumstances are woefully against me, but that I am a true and faithful friend to you, and also to your daughter," answered Cuthbert sadly, and yet with dignity.

"Do you deny that you are one of the accursed Osbornes?"

Flora's face had brightened a little; she hung upon her lover's answer now with feverish interest.

He saw it, and a melancholy smile crossed his face, leaving it graver even than before.

"I am Eric Osborne's son," answered he sadly.

"It is enough. And you came to Fenwicke Fen to accomplish his father's fiendish plan. Thank Heaven, you are defeated. Monsieur Lardeur, we are indebted to you for more than our lives," cried Luke Fenwicke, crossing to the Frenchman's side, and seizing his hand.

"My dear friend, was it not my own interest likewise? Could I see the flower I deemed almost too lovely to be transplanted to my home as queen and wife, blighted by such a foul deed and such a pitiable agent?"

"Mr. Fenwicke," began Cuthbert.

"Not another word. Get hence, out of my sight, before I pour upon you the curses of my heart."

"I have one question to ask him, papa, are you willing?" demanded Flora, with a desperate calmness which surprised them all.

Her father hesitated.

"It is the last, papa."

"Ask it then, here in this room."

She motioned with grave dignity toward the rear window, not out of sight of the others, but beyond easy hearing. Cuthbert with a dreary sigh obeyed the queenly gesture.

Once there, she lifted up to his those crystal eyes and said pleadingly:

"Cuthbert, only tell me that you were forced into it, that you struggled against it. You could not, oh, you could not have meant me such deadly evil of your own free will!"

"Flora," answered the youth as well as his quivering lips would allow, "as Heaven is my judge, I would joyfully send a dagger to my own heart, rather than injure a hair of your head. I was as innocent as a child. I came to Fenwicke Fen believing myself a Neil. I made the fatal discovery afterward. I was working—I am working in your cause. I can say no more. I have no proofs, appearances are all against me. I can only give you my word, Flora."

"Look into my eyes, Cuthbert," whispered Flora, almost wildly.

He obeyed.

"Now say it again, 'As Heaven is my judge, I am truly your friend, and not your enemy.'"

He repeated the words with solemn fervor.

A low passionate cry broke over her pale lips.

"Heaven be praised! Heaven be praised! Cuthbert, I believe you. I will trust you. Hush, do not show your relief. Tell me how I can help you—where I can see you, for you will be sent away!"

"At the willow tree, after dark, I will give a bird call three times when I am near. Bring John if you can. The holy saints bless you, Flora."

Monsieur Lardeur crossed the floor uneasily. Flora saw it, and turning away coldly from Cuthbert's side, she went over to her father, and put her hand into his.

He passed his trembling hands across her head in mute benediction.

"Flora dear, do you realize how much we owe Monsieur Lardeur, how we must abhor and detest this evil-minded Osborne?"

"I think I do, papa, but I am tired and bewildered, my head aches sadly. I wish we could go home."

"I am sorry to go away so abruptly, monsieur, but I really think it is best. I am extremely nervous myself," said Luke Fenwicke.

"Mademoiselle Flora's wish shall always be my law. I will order the carriage and some coffee for your refreshment before you leave. Another day we will have a pleasanter visit. I trust mademoiselle knows me now for a true friend."

Flora clung nervously to her father's arm, and bowed her answer.

"And something nearer and dearer soon!" he continued, playfully.

She burst into tears, and sobbed hysterically.

"The poor child has been terribly frightened, monsieur. She will regain her composure with quiet and rest," said Luke Fenwicke, deprecatingly, himself shaking in every limb.

As they left the room he turned to the motionless figure by the window.

"You can send from the inn for your effects; as for yourself, it will be at your peril if you darken my doors again."

Flora gave no sign of farewell. They hurried down to the ante-room, drank hastily the coffee brought by the page, and monsieur himself escorted them to the coach. As they drove off, Flora had the inexpressible relief of seeing Cuthbert come slowly from the door, descend the steps, and take the path down to the beach.

Norah came bustling out to meet them in her hearty, cheery way, earnest to hear their report of the day's pleasure. She stopped abruptly in her eager questioning.

"The saints deliver us! what's the matter? what has happened to dear Mr. Cuthbert?"

"Never mention his name again in my house, or in my presence!" cried her master sternly.

"I should just like to know what you think he's done, though I don't believe a word of it," exclaimed Norah, in no wise daunted.

"He has come here under a false name to work out the ruin of Fenwicke Fen; his name is not Neil at all; he is an Osborne, a worthy grandson of Black Osborne of Osborne Hall," vociferated Luke Fenwicke, losing his temper now he was safe at home.

"Well, I never heard the like! but I don't believe a single word, I say. Who says he's an Osborne? that be-diamonded and be-ruffled Frenchman?"

"Norah, you forget yourself; he acknowledges it himself. Send John to me, and help your mistress. She has a bad headache; don't mention that villain to her again."

Norah had seized the corner of her apron, and was rubbing away vigorously at a spot of crock from the fire, which blackened her plump arm.

"Osborne or Neil, he's no villain, I'll be bound for that," muttered she sulkily.

But she followed nimbly after Flora, who hurried silently up to her own chamber, and reaching it, flung herself upon the bed with a wild outburst of tears.

"Don't, don't, my darling, my pride, my treasure," cried Norah, gathering the poor girl into her arms and sobbing heartily in company; "they've been hurting your tender feelings, my lamb, they've been dealing harshly with you, but they shan't do it again; I wont trust you out of my sight again. It's all because of that hateful frog-eating Frenchman!"

Presently, Norah heard the whole story. The faithful creature was sorely troubled. She had been thoroughly imbued with the Fenwicke horror and hatred of the whole Osborne race. She could anathematize them as heartily as her master, but Mr. Cuthbert she had taken to from the first. She thoroughly admired and loved him. She had fed her imagination with pretty plots which gave him to her for a genuine master. She could not bring herself to be vexed with him, but if he said he was an Osborne, how was she to help it?

She was thankful when poor exhausted Flora fell off into slumber, that she might steal away and relieve her perturbed spirit by a consultation with John.

"Hech!" grunted John, as he listened patiently to her excited voluble narrative, "I've just mistrusted something like it ever since he's been here."

"And never opened your mouth to me. You provoking man! I wish I had not told you a word about it. Now what's to be done? Must our sweet darling, Miss Flora, break her dear little heart?"

"I don't know. It all 'puzzles me," said John, "though I've been so careful to watch Mr. Cuthbert, I can't believe he's very bad. I wish I knew just the truth about him."

"Oh, that makes me think, she wants you to go with her down to the willow, after master has gone to bed. He said she was to be sure and bring you with her. He's an honest gentleman, Osborne or not."

"I will go," said John, "and we must hope for the best."

And Norah could get no further consolation from him, and went back to her mistress.

In a little time came a stout serving-man from the Hall. Monsieur sent him with a little note to Mr. Fenwicke.

"He was uneasy about his friends, knowing that desperate enemy was at large. Their defensive force was so feeble, would they oblige him by allowing this faithful fellow of his to sleep at the Fen that night?"

Mr. Fenwicke was extremely gratified as well as satisfied with the arrangement. He had already begun to shrink nervously from the lonely stillness of the night. He gave the man a bed usually occupied by John in the room opening from his, and retired early.

Norah had informed her mistress of the new arrangement. She started up from her pillow with flushed cheeks.

"It is not anxiety for our safety, it is to watch my movements. I will not go to-night. Tell John to go alone, and bid him say to Cuthbert I am too ill to come, but that I keep my faith in him. I will meet him there to-morrow."

Accordingly John stole forth alone, and made his way as noiselessly as possible to the willow tree.

He started nervously at every cracking twig or rustling leaf, and clutched the short cudgel he carried more firmly, but kept a brave heart, loyal to the Fenwicke cause.

Cuthbert was leaning gloomily against the tree trunk, on the bank alone. He was evidently disappointed at Flora's non-appearance, but inexpressibly relieved to see John.

"Well, John," said he, "how do you look upon me, as an enemy to your master and mistress? Speak frankly man, for Heaven's sake."

"I hope not, Mr. Cuthbert. I can't believe it yet. It has a bad look for poor Miss Flora, but I can't help hoping there's a way out of it."

"There is, there is John, and you can show it to me, and you only. Oh, John, hear me swear under these shining stars, that a truer friend to Fenwicke Fen does not exist than I, Osborne though I be."

He laid both hands into John's rough palm, and lifted his eyes upwards to the sky. It was not so dim a light, but the old servant could see the tears pouring over the young man's cheeks.

"I believe you, Mr. Cuthbert!" exclaimed John.

"And you will help me, John? it is for Flora's sake."

"If I can, Mr. Cuthbert."

"Hist! was that a step? Can any one have followed you?"

They remained perfectly motionless some time, then Cuthbert whispered:

"I think it was only the wind; but let us go softly down the steps to the flagged walk below, and speak low; it will be so fatal for any one to hear our talk."

They went below, and there in denser darkness sat down on the stones.

"John," said Cuthbert, "I think you have suspected my frequent errands in this direction."

"You mean about the digging, sir?"

"Exactly. I felt sure you knew about it. You knew what it was after, John."

"Not exactly, sir. But I know about the strange digging going on here; there's been more than you about it."

"Yes, another, an old man."

"Two, sir. A man in a black cloak, with eyes like a cat's in a dark night, and another, if I'm not mistaken, Monsieur Armand Lardeur himself."

"Monsieur Armand! Ha! that gives proof to my suspicions. I know the man now, John, he is determined to marry Flora Fenwicke. He is a deeper villain than you think. His fine house, his ready purse are not his own. He is playing false to more than one."

John listened attentively.

"Well, sir."

"John, you know for what we all are digging."

"Yes, sir, a thin iron box."

"Can you show me where it is?" cried Cuthbert, clutching his arm franticly.

"I did not say that, sir," returned John cautiously.

"Let me tell you my story, John, then you will trust me."

"I do trust you, Mr. Cuthbert; if you will promise not to injure my master through it, I will show you the box."

"Injure him! Good Heavens, John, it is to confer upon him his longed for happiness—to save him from Monsieur Armand's clutches, from Osborne plotting, that I seek it. Is it possible you are ignorant of the contents of that box?"

"I know it is full of papers; the outside is written over closely, and I would not look at them. I heard the man say they were to do some terrible injury to my master, so I dug them up and hid them."

"John, John, produce them, and Fenwicke Fen will ever bless you. It may be its master will never forgive me for being Eric Osborne's son, but he will at least be compelled to put away his unjust accusations."

"I don't understand," said John, in a bewildered tone. "I heard a man one night, over twenty years ago, muttering fiercely about his hate for all the Fenwickes. I dogged his footsteps and saw him come down here, then I recognized him for Olaf Osborne. He was digging in the ground. I heard him talk wildly over his work, and made out that something was hid there, which he was to dig up sometime to work the ruin of Fenwicke Fen. I was half frightened to death. The Osbornes had an uncanny name in these parts, and I was afraid he had laid an evil spell there.

The next day I went down and looked over the ground. It was so neatly done I couldn't find the spot, but I found a small piece of paper with marks and lines on it. I was sure it was the key, because the poplar tree was set down in it. I got a surveying man, who was around here, to work it out for me with some excuse to set him easy about it. He showed me the spot, and I said a tree was to be set there, and put up a mark. That night I worked with a will, and I found the iron box. I was half afraid to touch it, but my fear of it sometime harming my master's family made me bold. I just peeped in and saw it was a bundle of papers, the outside one all covered with close writing, and then I buried it again in a safe place, and said to myself that the wicked Osbornes should never find it. It took [illegible]-time to think of the right place, but I'm pretty sure there couldn't have been a better. I've laughed a little in my sleeve to see all the digging, but I've never lisped a word of it to anybody, not even to Norah."

"And you cut down the poplar."

"Yes, sir, and I didn't put the willow in its place; not by two yards, and that makes a wide difference in the figure, don't it? I told you a lie, sir. I am glad to beg your pardon, for its laid heavy on my heart."

"John, John, don't talk of pardon, you deserve the blessings of all the land. You've saved your master and Flora, no matter what becomes of me, if they are happy, safe from persecution, and my father's memory cleared."

"I don't exactly understand it yet, but you do, and it's all right, Mr. Cuthbert."

"You shall know everything, John, nothing shall be hid from you. You shall be my trusty coadjutor. [illegible], you are the son of the servant who was with that noble Fenwicke who was killed, who lost the great prize, the bundle of Bank of England notes, whose numbers to this day have been unpr[illegible] box contains them, John, the bundle of notes untouched, and there is yet a fortnight left in which that rich mining ground can be claimed by the terms of the contract."

"Sir, Mr. Cuthbert, I don't understand," stammered John.

"My wicked grandfather put them there; he buried them, and when he died, gave over the secret to his sons."

"Oh the Lord be praised!" cried honest John, beginning to realize the importance of the discovery; "and to think I might have brought them to light years ago. Let us get them now, Mr. Cuthbert."

"We shall need to be sure there are no spies about, another night we may not be sure of it. Yes, John, let us get them to-night."

"We must have shovels and a crowbar."

"Very well, will you go for them? It will hardly be wise for me to venture to the house."

"And I must move cautiously myself; that tormented scallion of monsieur's will have his eyes open," said John testily.

"What do you mean?" asked Cuthbert, anxiously.

John explained.

"That man is playing a desperate game. I know him now. Olaf Osborne, who is, has been, and will always, I fear, be a relentless enemy of the Fenwickes, selected him as a tool to work his purposes. Upon my appearance he changed his plans. Monsieur Armand is aware of this precious package, he means to secure a fortune by marrying Flora, and at the same time, no doubt, closely fleecing his benefactor. John, you must save my beautiful Flora from such a wretch."

"You must marry her yourself Mr. Cuthbert."

The young man sighed heavily.

"I fear her father's obstinacy will make it impossible; but now let us go to work."

It was some time before John returned, but he brought the necessary implements, and a dark lantern, and then silently led the way to the huge rock, lifting up its massive front in sharp outline against the sky some distance farther on the shore toward Osborne Hall.

"Surely you could not hide it under this solid rock," said Cuthbert, as John paused here.

"That's what I thought every one would say," said John exultingly, "and as I concluded it would be the best place, I blasted out a quarter of the rock, dug a hole in the spot, put in my piece, filled up the cracks with sand and pebbles, and made it firm again. Twenty years has made it look as if it had never been parted, but I guess we can start it."

It required two hours' hard labor executed cautiously, and then their efforts were crowned with success.

Cuthbert could scarcely realize his own delight when at last the long coveted box was in his hands while faithful John began to sob like a woman.

"It's you must carry it to my master," said John, "he'll blame me for keeping it secret from him so long. You'll please to say nothing about my part, Mr. Cuthbert; it's enough for me it's found."

"I would rather prove to him the villainy of the Frenchman, first. He'll be hard to convince otherwise, I fear."

"Maybe so: he's strong set when once he sets out, is my master. You know best, I am sure."

"But what can be done with the packet? I dare not keep it with me."

"Give it back to the rock. Sure if it's taken care of the box twenty years, it can keep it two or three days."

"It is best, I suppose."

"Let's have it then. It wont be so hard to get at it another time. I'll be down here early in the morning to smooth up the ground."

And consigning it anew to the hiding place, they pried back the piece of rock, and presently with lightened hearts separated for the night.

Neither saw the serpent-like figure prone on the sand, writhing itself out of their path.

The services of Monsieur Lardeur's servant was not offered for the next night, and Flora came down to the tree to meet Cuthbert under John's care.

The young man sprang eagerly to meet her.

"Flora, dear Flora, how can I thank you enough for your generous trust," he began joyously.

She replied, warmly:

"Oh, Cuthbert, what woful times are these, and yet you seem cheerful, even gay."

"And why not, dear Flora?" I am innocent, and you trust me. I admit I am in excellent spirits, the gloom has passed away."

"Would it were so with me: the horrors seem to open upon me with every added day. I am weak and dispirited, but it is hardly strange."

"Has anything new transpired?" asked he anxiously.

"Yes," answered she, shuddering, "something horrible, too. I have not dared to tell any one at the house, but I should go mad if I had not you to reveal it to you."

"What can it be? Monsieur Lardeur?"

"No, no: listen, and I will tell it to you. I was wretched and miserable as you may imagine, last night, my nerves all unstrung, my heart sinking within me like a weight of lead. I could not sleep, but tossed to and fro, seeing all sorts of strange shapes. Norah had wheeled the lounge into my room and slept there, and I had a candle burning dimly. It must have been much past midnight when I heard Flossy give one short bark.

I knew in a moment something had frightened her; it was her little sharp yelp of terror. It was not continued, and I lay listening for some further sound. Then it suddenly occurred to me that the strange servant of Monsieur Armand's might have been down and shut her in the dark passage-way between the kitchen and the sitting-room; I thought the poor little creature might be a comfort to me lying awake there, and without stopping to consider the matter, I slipped out of bed and threw a shawl around me, took my candle and went down toward the stairway. A sudden gust of wind swept over me, and blew out the candle. I saw that the window of your room must be open, and was groping my way toward it when I beheld a sight which fairly curdled my blood in my veins. Oh, Cuthbert, Cuthbert!" cried the girl clinging to him franticly, "I saw such a frightful being; if it was not his ghost, it was Black Osborne himself! just such a great head, and massive jaws, and burning, glowering eyes. He was tying something to the handle of your door. I felt my limbs stiffening, but I managed to crawl back to my room. I tried to wake Norah, to call her name, but I could only sink, faint and giddy upon my bed. As I was lying there panting, I saw my door pushed slowly open and the hideous apparition glide noiselessly in. My heart beat suffocatingly, but I closed my eyes and prayed fervently for help. Whatever it was, it came to my bedside and muttered wild fierce threats, saying over and over again:

"'Not yet, not yet! but in a little time your proud head shall bow low in shame.'

"At last it went away, and I sprang up, got a light, and under pretence of being thirsty woke Norah. She saw how agitated I was, and tried her best to soothe me. I dared not tell her what I had seen. Oh, how thankful I was for morning, when its cheerful light broke upon me. I was almost ready to believe it had been some horrible dream, but I went out at once to your room, and there, on the handle of the door, was tied a black ribbon. Tell me, Cuthbert, what dire misfortune is impending over us all, beyond even the trials of yesterday."

The youth stroked softly the trembling hands.

"Flora, dear Flora, be calm; it was no spectre, it was a human being. It must have been my wretched uncle, Olaf Osborne. You must tell John about him. Oh, that your father had not driven me away from the house. You must have better protection there. I must consult John; has he no relative who can come on some pretence or another, and stay a week or so? I will take care he is well paid. Even Monsieur's servant would be some protection. There will be no danger to-night. His errand is evidently accomplished. I will not conceal from you that the ribbon was a signal to me, so dismiss all fear of evil omens."

"To you? oh Cuthbert, Cuthbert, what can you do with such an evil being?"

"Endeavor to thwart his revengeful plans, to render harmless his wild threats. Trust me a little longer, Flora, dear. I wish I felt as easy about Monsieur Lardeur as about your mysterious visitor. Your father is strangely fascinated by the wiles of that Frenchman."

Flora sighed.

"It seems a year since he came; a year of pain and grief. Ah, me! I wonder if I shall ever be gay and light-hearted again?"

"My poor little Flora! it is cruel; you were so gay and innocent and guileless. Alas, if my coming has brought all this upon you, well may I wish I had remained forever in Marseilles, though I lost thereby the priceless blessing of your love."

"Nay, nay, Cuthbert, if only thus I could have known you, I will murmur no longer at these trials," answered the girl in tender, earnest tones.

"I think the trials would have come even had I remained away," continued he thoughtfully; "nothing would have changed Olaf Osborne's fierce plans, only the instrument chosen to work them would have been of a different sort. Sometimes I wonder, Flora, that you trust me at all, circumstances give such fatal evidence against me."

The girl laid her two hands trustfully into his, and said in a low, tremulous voice:

"Cuthbert, can one distrust if they love truly and sincerely? I know that you love me in return. Oh what a beautiful ending it might be to all the fierce feuds of these long years, if my father would only see it."

"Hush, some one comes!" cried Cuthbert, listening anxiously.

It was John, who whispered hastily:

"There is some one on the beach."

"Take Flora home, John, my faithful John, and oh, watch over her closely. Can you meet me over at the town to-morrow?"

There was no time for further talk.

John lifted Flora in his arms and darted hastily up the bank.

CHAPTER IX.

Olaf Osborne confronted his nephew as he turned down toward the beach to draw away attention to the noise of John's hurried strides through the matted bushes of the upper bank.

"Well, young man, I have returned at last no wiser for my pains. How is it with your search, and your success at your love-making?"

His sneering laugh sounded more than ever wild and crazed. Cuthbert repressed the shudder of horror and disgust as best he might, though a moment before he spoke, and then replied:

"The first had succeeded wonderfully, the last is decidedly injured by means of one Monsieur Armand Lardeur, who is the reputed owner of Osborne Hall, and who lives there in fine style, as I have witnessed with my own eyes."

"You have found the package?" cried Olaf Osborne, leaping up and clapping his hands, and waving his long arms in frantic glee: "you have found the package! Hail to you, for a true Osborne! Now I can sleep a night in peace without fear of Black Osborne's skinny finger shaking in my face."

"Where is it? let me gloat my eyes upon it, let me rejoice my hands with the touch of it!" he added, after another wild dance around the beach.

"It is not here. I put it into safe-keeping, of course; but I have it, it is found," answered Cuthbert, coldly; "I want to talk about Monsieur Armand Lardeur; I said I thought you knew the man."

"I do; what of him?"

"Do you know what he has done? he is seeking Flora Fenwicke for his wife."

The strange creature shouted with laughter.

"I know his monkey-tricks well, that was why I picked him out. Well, she's a little fool if she prefers him to you!"

"She does not," answered Cuthbert; "but her father does; "I am certain he means she shall marry Monsieur Lardeur."

"All the more romantic for you. Plan an elopement. Boy, it will make the whole scene richer for the denouement."

"Monsieur Armand Lardeur has seen fit to make that impossible. He invited us all to the Hall, he took us to the portrait gallery, he told Luke Fenwicke and his daughter a true story; that of the young man, son of Eric Osborne, of Marseilles, who was sent to the coast of Wales to fulfill the old Osborne vengeance. He pointed from my father's portrait to my living face, of course the Fenwickes were struck with consternation, of course they turned me from their doors."

"A pretty kettle of fish!" ejaculated Olaf, "that devil does not mean mischief against me, does he? What can be his object? For it is only interest that pulls the wire for him. If he angers me, he loses all his luxuries, he goes back to be the barber's son in Paris. In the name of all the fiends, how did he find out about your being here. The knave is up to any trick; he must have listened to my talks with Black Osborne when he comes to the grave to hear how I am getting along."

"This Monsieur is, as I understand, the man you adopted to take my place, if I failed to make my appearance."

"He is; he has no claim upon me, I can cast him off any minute. I have fed and clothed and bejewelled him, to make him appear as master of the Hall, that I might carry out my plans effectively. The fellow has a rare taste, too. He helped me vastly in furnishing the Hall. Did you see it? What think you, will it be difficult for you to win the proudest lady in the land to come thither as its mistress? It is yours, all yours, as soon as those beggarly Fenwickes are finished. So the old man was there. Did he think it a fine contrast to his mouldering old house at the Fen? Ha! ha!"

"He believes it all Monsieur Lardeur's, he does not think an Osborne has any claim there. He is an adroit villain. I believe he knows all about the packet. I believe he means to possess it, marry Flora Fenwicke, and present the claim for the mining ground. It will make a sure fortune for him, not dependant upon any one's whim."

A volley of curses came from the listener.

"I will drive him away like a dog. I will whip him back to the barber's shop. But he has not found the packet?"

"No; Heaven be praised for that. When do you want them presented?"

"Not for twenty days yet; it is still good. Oh, how long will they seem to me! Twenty years of purgatory, and then the glorious triumph!"

He laughed again, peal upon peal of wild, blood-freezing sounds, that were rather wails and yells mingled than laughter. Presently the tossing arms drooped, the head was bowed, the eyes filmed over the burning glow.

"I think when it is over I shall die; the flame burns so fiercely it cannot hold out long. It is only my wild Osborne will which keeps me alive now. I am old—an old man. When my triumph comes I shall go out like a snuffed candle. You will be the master of Osborne Hall, then, boy."

"You will die—and after that, what then? cried Cuthbert, moved by a sudden, mighty impulse to his better nature. "Oh, Uncle Olaf, can you think of death, and still hold this cruel revenge? It makes me shudder for you, let us forego it now; let us make peace, and have a tranquil death-bed!"

"A tranquil death-bed! when I have not had a night's rest of peaceful sleep for years," returned he, in a hollow voice. "Black Osborne's wishes would drown a priest's benedictions.

Tush, boy, there is no other way for us, it must be carried out, that deed begun eighty years ago. Then I shall rest—then I shall rest!"

As he said these words, with a low laugh, he cried:

"See, there he comes. I must follow him, he beckons me to a conference. I will see you again to-morrow."

He went off like a dart shot from a bow, at a speed marvellous in one of his age.

Cuthbert sat down and buried his face in his hands.

"Unfortunate being! he is a maniac if ever one was known; that fatal inheritance of a father's vengeful plans has turned his brain. I must conquer this aversion to him, I must cease to regard him as a responsible being. I, the sole kinsman left."

Cuthbert waited around the town inn all day, but no John came, and no intelligence from Fenwicke Fen. He made his way to the willow the moment sunset shrouded the beach from observation, and waited there, his heart sinking heavier and heavier. Twice he started toward the mansion itself, and then turned back, fearing that it might injure his cause should he meet Luke Fenwicke there. He wanted certain proof of Monsieur Lardeur's knavery before he confronted the indignant master of Fenwicke Fen. But as he repeated his bird-note call again and again, and no response, he grew nervous and anxious. Why had John failed him? Could it be that honest old man had deceived him! No; he would never believe that. But if no harm had come to him, if the protection of his presence was taken away from Flora? He repented now that they had not carried the package of notes to Mr. Fenwicke the very moment of their discovery. He would wait another day to hear from John, and failing in that, would dig the box up himself, and put it into the town banking-office for safe keeping.

He spent half the night on the beach, but no one came, not even Olaf Osborne, and dejected and anxious, mounting the horse he had tied at a safe distance from the Fenwicke grounds, Cuthbert returned to the town.

He denied himself the much needed sleep to rise early and be in readiness for John's appearance. But no John came. The morning wore away, and noon arrived. He had turned disconsolately down the street on which the inn was situated, for a walk, hoping to calm his perturbed spirit by the bustle of market-day, which filled all the place with carts and streams of foot-passengers from the country.

A woman suddenly seized his hand with an exclamation of joy.

"The Lord save you, Mr. Cuthbert. I'm so glad to find you," cried Norah, for it was she.

"What have you come to tell me?" demanded Cuthbert, wringing her hand almost fiercely in the relief he experienced at sight of her honest face.

"Oh, mercy on us, Mr. Cuthbert, there be terrible times at Fenwicke Fen, and I haven't half enough of time to tell you about it, for fear that sneaking Frenchman's spy will be along. John is in a peck of trouble, but he's smart enough for them, though they have locked him up."

"Locked up John!"

"Yes, Mr. Cuthbert, and my darling Miss Flora too, and it's the master's orders, only that nasty Frenchman made him do it. You see the man came early in the morning yesterday and had a long talk with my master, then they called Miss Flora, and she came out looking more dead than alive, and her own father scowled at her as if she wasn't his dead wife's only child. Then John was called, and I heard loud talk, but couldn't make anything out of it. But when he came out he whispers sharp to me:

"'Make believe you're on their side, Norah; say Miss Flora must marry monsieur the devil there, then you can help us.' I see what he wanted, and when my turn came, I was ready for monsieur. They told me monsieur was to give a fine fortune to make Fenwicke Fen better than the old times, all for marrying Flora; that she was obstinate now because that wicked Osborne had bewitched her—that's you, Mr. Cuthbert, begging your pardon—but she would soon see how much better it was for her, and that they must be married the next night—that's this blessed night, Mr. Cuthbert. I joined in the best way I knew how; talked about how splendid it would be; said she was a silly thing to put away such a grand honor as to be monsieur's wife, and a lot of rigmarole that made them both call me a good nice woman, who knew what was right. My master told me to go and coax Flora into seeing things in my way, promised me fine clothes and ease when Fenwicke Fen was a proud house again, and monsieur tucked the gold pieces into my hand. So I came out in triumph. John was sitting in the kitchen, and one of monsieur's men was standing in the door.

I went up to John, and began to berate him for being so obstinate, and not seeing what was right, and I managed to let him know I'd done my best. Then I went up to Flora. The poor thing was like a dumb, frozen creature. She sat staring around her with such dry, wild eyes, I was sore scared. I took her into my arms just as if she was a baby, and told her not to believe the worst would come, that we'd get her out of it; that John was to plan, and I was to cheat 'em the best I could. She brightened up a little, and then burst out crying, "Oh, Norah, Norah, my father says he will leave me his dying curse if I don't marry Monsieur Armand. Oh, Norah, he says I am to marry him to-morrow night.'

"'You shan't do any such thing,' says I, 'John says Mr. Cuthbert will help the matter, and I'm to take him word somehow.'

"Then the poor thing fell to kissing me with the tears pouring all the while over her cheeks. I was sharp to hear steps stealing along outside, and I gave her a nod and began praising monsieur, and telling how grand a lady she would be, and all that stuff, and sure enough when I went out there was monsieur in the hall, and he gave me another gold peice. Here they are—take them, Mr. Cuthbert, maybe you'll want them, for you must do something to save her. Monsieur is staying there all the time now, he and his two servants; the marriage is to be at eight o'clock, and they are to ride all night in the coach, and go right on to London. I expect the minister must be spoken to to-day. Monsieur has been over, and his man is over to the shop. I've been buying some things monsieur ordered for Miss Flora. You must do something to save her, Mr. Cuthbert, John says you can; oh, Lord save me! I've near forgot what he charged me to say when I carried in his breakfast. He whispered it when I was scolding at the top of my voice, and listening to him with all my ears, for monsieur was outside.

"He says, 'Ask Cuthbert to see if something we hid is safe. He'll know what I mean. Tell him I overheard monsieur say something which frightened me; which made me think the noise we heard that night, was somebody listening; and them that listen can watch. If it is safe, let him bring it before the marriage.'

That's what John said, and now I must go—the worst will be to pay if they mistrust me. I shall be locked up too. They're afraid Miss Flora will run away to you. Have you any word for John?"

Cuthbert had not moved his eyes from her face during this long, agitatedly delivered speech. His quick mind had grasped the whole situation.

"God bless you, Norah, for your faithfulness. Tell John I will do my best. Cheer up my poor, poor Flora. Say to her that I will move everything to save her from such a fate; that I have strong hopes of convincing her father of Monsieur Lardeur's villany and mercenary spirit, though at the last moment. Go, now, every moment left me I must work. If you hear a peculiar bird call—John and Flora know it—come out to me if you can."

He wrung Norah's hand again and darted back to the inn. In half an hour two stout countrymen and Cuthbert himself were driving a wagon furiously toward Fenwicke Fen. They left one man to guard the vehicle and ward off interruption, and the other two marched boldly to the beach with pick and shovel.

Cuthbert cared nothing for darkness now, every moment was of vital importance, and he was prepared to face any opposition.

The cold perspiration stood on his forehead as he pried away the piece of rock, and the other man scooped out the loose dirt.

A wild sob burst from Cuthbert. The iron box lay there empty! turned mockingly, with its lid wrenched off, to greet the explorer's eye.

He ground down an imprecation, it was no time for threats or unavailing grief, only for deeds. Deadly pale and fearfully stern, he stalked away, leaving the men to keep watch for his return.

He took his way straight for Osborne Hall. Stalked by the awed servants, and demanded to see its master.

"Monsieur Lardeur has gone," stammered the footman, frightened by his strange looks, and following after him.

"I know it; it is your master I asked for, the owner of the house."

The servants glanced inquiringly at each other.

"What's all this noise about?" demanded a sharp voice from the head of the grand staircase; "I said I was not to be disturbed."

"It is I, Uncle Olaf. I want to see you," cried Cuthbert, springing up the stairs with two or three bounds."

"You here? what for? what's up now?"

"Take me to privacy, and you shall know."

The old man led the way through richly furnished suites of rooms, past every luxurious chamber to the top of the house, and ushered him into a room in the cupola.

What a room for the master of that house of luxury! The floor was bare, the walls destitute of hangings, only a camp stool, and a hard pallet bed, and a little deal table, composed its furnishing. A large bottle marked laudanum, and a jug of water stood on the table; a fine spyglass was mounted at the window, commanding a view of the beach below Fenwicke Fen. Nothing else, except the great black cloak on the floor, was to be seen.

"This is the only room I can have until the vengeance is accomplished!" said he, glancing around derisively; "not much like that chosen by Monsieur Armand, the puppy! I kicked him out of doors the other night; he presumed to threaten great deeds."

"He will accomplish them unless you help me!" exclaimed Cuthbert; "he marries Flora Fenwicke to-night."

"Tush! What harm is that? Only double degradation. The wretch has a little grisette wife in Paris."

"I know nothing about that; I know he will marry Flora Fenwicke to-night unless we prevent him. I know the pitiful wretch followed me that night that he had stolen the package! If the marriage is legal, and the papers presented before the twenty days are up, he is a rich man for all you or me."

Olaf Osborne glared at him, his lips twitched convulsively, and one hand clutched wildly at his heart. His breath came gaspingly, the white flecks of foam gathered around his swollen protruded tongue, a hoarse roar came from his laboring chest.

In alarm, Cuthbert seized the water jug and sprinkled some upon his face, and as the convulsion relaxed, held the lip of the jug to his mouth.

In a few moments he drank with less difficulty. He motioned toward the bottle, but Cuthbert shook his head resolutely.

"Fool, it is my medicine—not poison!"

And Cuthbert reluctantly gave it to him.

He swallowed a small portion, and in a short time seemed quite recovered, although still ghastly pale.

"The attacks come oftener—the end is at hand; but not until I have succeeded," said he. Then rousing himself, he exclaimed fiercely: "Did you tell me that wily fiend had got the package? How came you to allow it? You told me it was in a safe place."

"I thought so. Only one who must have followed us to the rock could have dreamed of its being there."

And Cuthbert told how and where the box had been hidden.

"You see now that is quite evident he means the marriage to be a legal one. They go on to London at once. No doubt the papers will be immediately presented; there is not an hour's time to lose. What shall be done?"

"The serpent! To think I taught him trickery that he should turn it upon me!" shrieked Olaf, beating his thin, claw-like hands together. "To think the package should be in his, before it had touched my hands!"

"Can you help me in any way to defeat him?" demanded Cuthbert.

"I can tear out his heart!" shrieked the maniac. "Now I know why Black Osborne sneered so last night when I was promising such quick work. But I will have it—I will have it!"

He went off into a paroxysm of wild invective, and at last in utter despair of receiving help from him, Cuthbert rose to go.

"Hold," said he, calming himself by a mighty effort, "what time did you say this marriage was to take place?"

"At eight o'clock."

"How many do they count there at that nest of traitors?"

"There are two servants beside this Frenchman. Mr. Fenwicke has two servants, but you may count them both on our side. The clergyman may have a servant."

"Good! I have two stout men here. You and I ought to be worth another ten, if our arms are as valiant as those of our ancestors. We will surround the house, seize the wretch, and compel him to disgorge his plunder. At eight you say. At half-past seven we will be there."

"It is a desperate plan, but better that than none at all. Yet it may make trouble—the law can punish such a proceeding I suppose."

"I will have the package; if you can get it by half-past seven, I and my men will be there. Monsieur the barber's son, shall have more guests at his wedding than he anticipates."

Cuthbert took his departure at once, and went back to the beach. The men reported the close interrogations of a servant who had come down from the house. They thought that he had gone off unsuspecting for whom they waited, as they endeavored to baffle him.

Cuthbert was not so certain. He sent the men away and remained hovering around the place the rest of the day, hoping to see Norah, and sounding his call continually.

She came once, running hastily as if in pursuit of Flossy, who came leaping joyfully toward the clump of bushes where Cuthbert stood concealed.

"Are you here anywhere, sir?" called Norah, in a sharp whisper.

"What do you want, Norah?"

"Oh, sir—have you got any help for us? Miss Flora is ready to sink into despair, and John has hard work to keep up heart. Speak quickly, while I mind the dog."

"Say to Flora, I will do my best. Tell John his fears were true—monsieur found us out. Ask him if he can get the packet from him in any way; he must have it on his person."

"They're coming! Don't talk. Flossy, you naughty creature! Why do you run away?"

CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

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Fruit in Rooms.

We should be chary of keeping ripe fruit in our sitting-rooms, and especially beware of laying it about the sick chamber for any length of time. The complaint which some people make about a faint sensation in the presence of fruit is not fanciful; they may be really affected by it. Two continental chemists have shown that from the moment of plucking apples, cherries, currants, and other fruits, are subject to incessant transformation. At first, they absorb oxygen, thus robbing the surrounding air of its vital elements; then they evolve carbonic acid, and this in far greater volume than the purer gas is absorbed, so that we have poison given us in the place of pure air, with compound interest. The temperature of the room affects the rate of change; warmth, as might be expected, accelerating it.

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Though arsenic is a deadly poison, yet taken by animals in certain quantities it will cause them to grow fat, because this singular substance increases the power of digesting fat, and lessens the excretions of nitrogen.

THE CLOUD AND THE RAINBOW.

By Mary A. Lowell.

AND you think that these sorrows—these light summer clouds that are drifting above you, make your life full of darkness? You see no rainbow shining through them—no summer sunlight beyond—not even the sunset at the close—nor the path by which you are at length to emerge into a brighter and clearer atmosphere?"

"None—I think life henceforth will be very dark. I feel as if I were standing by the shore of a great stormy sea, where the raindrops are falling heavily, and the chill, gray clouds are constantly sending down a shower of hail among the answering stones upon the beach; and——"

"Oh, hush, dearest Sybil! It is almost sinful for you to feel thus. Think of the brave souls who, almost their life through, have endured martyrdom, grasping the cross, and treading with bleeding feet, the burning pathway that led them 'through much tribulation,' to the end of their journey. Why, you have scarcely begun life yet; and you will one day look back to this, and think it but a light thing after all."

She was but a youthful preacher, who uttered these words to me as I sat weeping by her side—one who could hardly have experienced, it would seem, sufficient grief to make her thus eloquent, and yet there was the serene light of a divine patience in her eyes, that told of trials passed through, and borne meekly and with resignation.

"I will tell you, dear Sybil, some of my mother's trials, which I hope will make you feel that your own are light in comparison. You remember her, do you not? with her slight, drooping figure, small, white hands, and face that looked as if all the color had been washed out with tears. And so it was.

"My parents had seven children, five sons and two daughters. I was the youngest of all. My father went to sea; my oldest brother accompanied him, and the rest went to learn different kinds of business.

"Between myself and Harry (the sailor) there was a great attachment. He was not at all the bold and rough youth you may have imagined him to be, on account of his profession. I have never known a man so gentle. Brave, where bravery was needed, he yet subsided into an almost feminine manner, a sort of graciousness, if I may so call it, that tempted and softened his whole character, without making it soft or weak.

"Carlos, my next oldest brother, was just the reverse of Harry. Handsome, bright, free as air, spending his little gains like a prince, every one liked him, and yet every one feared for him. Every one seemed to augur a future for the brave and generous youth, which might be anything but a pleasant perspective to dwell upon.

"Then there were twin brothers, Herman and Oscar; and the youngest boy, who was named Francis, after the good Fenelon, and who was a feeble and crippled child.

"I have told you of my brothers first, but I must tell you of my sister Margaret; with whom ever to exist was happiness enough. She was of one of those rare and beautiful natures, which are so open and candid in themselves, that there is no suspicion of another can ever enter into its depths.

"To sew diligently for our [illegible] family—for our means were limited enough—to take care of poor, lame Francis, whose side she scarcely ever left; to give my mother all the helpful service which she could spare from her [illegible], and to attend diligently to my education, were the grand objects of Margaret's life. And she brought a cheerful unselfishness to these multiform duties, which only a kind heart and a sunny temper can impart. Nothing to her was a task. She made pastime of all her labors, and never seemed so happy as when pressed on all sides to perform some work which seemed almost too mighty for her delicate frame to sustain.

"I did not go to school then. Francis and I studied together. I take no shame in saying that I was far beyond him, ere I had studied a month with him. I was quicker to attain—but I lost as soon as learned, what he always retained.

"We were not a lonely family, although my father and Harry were absent so much. Carlos was coming home to us every afternoon from the bank, where he had a situation, and the twins were with us from their boarding-school every Saturday, and staid until Monday. My mother—not the drooping figure you saw, but with a bright smile then on her handsome countenance, and hope for her children warm at her heart. I can see her now making preparations for the return of her husband and son; going over the house, painting, papering, and doing an immense amount of extra work, in order that it might look pleasant and comfortable to their eyes; and that she might have more time to spend with the long absent.

"It was spring now, and we were daily expecting them, after a year's voyage. It was a bright, moonlight night when the ship wore round into the bay. We saw her as she crossed the shining track where the moonlight lay, watched her slow progress, as it seemed to us—for we felt almost as if she were a sentient being, and must know our impatience. But she stood off until morning, as if unwilling that we should know what had happened, while it was yet sleeping time.

"With the first ray of sunrise, we saw her fast coming in, and not until then did we notice that her flag hung motionless at half-mast! Neither of us spoke, but each knew by the sudden start, the half-suppressed moan of anguish, the whitening of the lips, that there was death on board.

"Soon the ship owner, a kind, friendly man, came in softly, and sat down among us. He saw by our faces that we were prepared for the worst, and he spared us the relation of any circumstances, and only spoke of my father's worth and integrity, and of the comfort it must have been to have Harry, 'his good son,' as he called him, to smooth his last hours.

"These tributes to my father and to Harry were very dear to us, I assure you. He said much more that was kind and thoughtful; then seeing Harry come in at the gate, he made a precipitate retreat, feeling, no doubt, that we should not wish a stranger to witness our meeting.

"I cannot describe to you that meeting. For myself, I had but one thought, and that was that Harry was thenceforth to be our stay and dependence; and truly, as he stood there, so stately and calm in his grief, so tender of my mother, so anxious to assure her that all was done for his father that could be done, and repeating his last words in such a gentle voice it was no wonder that my child heart should be comforted.

"The ship owner, Colonel Spencer, bestowed the command of the ship upon Harry, the next voyage. My mother had an almost superstitious dread of his going again in the vessel in which my father had died; but her good sense overcame it, and she settled down, after he was gone away, to a calm and silent grief, which I think always abode with her.

"Except for this, we went on much the same as before—thinking that if Harry was only returned to us, we might yet be not entirely miserable; and watching the newspapers with an eagerness that those who have no dear ones upon the sea, can hardly believe.

"Ah! how little we know when we call death such an evil. My poor father was spared what we felt, when another and more bitter calamity came upon us, under which my mother almost shrunk. How shall I tell you that Carlos was unfaithful and dishonest at the bank, and that he was publicly disgraced in the town where his ancestors, from time immemorial, had sustained a character unblemished in integrity?"

"It was some consolation to my mother to know that Carlos had not originated this dreadful affair—that he had been led into it by older and more hackneyed sinners; but there was a blight and a stain upon him that her tears could not wash and it tainted every source of comfort that was left to her, except the remembrance of Harry.

"She could stake her hopes of salvation upon Harry's integrity—and well, indeed, she might. *That* was the rock which, next to her hope in God, my poor mother rested upon.

"From considerations of his family, of his dead father, and also that it was his first offence, and might never be repeated, the officers of the bank not only forgave him, but allowed him to retain his place. What of that? We knew that he was watched like a common thief—his manhood blasted in the eyes of hundreds. Oh! *death* would have been nothing—nothing in comparison to this living trouble. Then the constant fear of his falling again, and the constant fear, too, that he would see and know our suspicions.

"One way and another, our lives were wearing away in a state that defies description, until Harry came home again. I never saw any one so grieved and astonished as he was. He waited on the bank officers, in a manly and a noble manner, that made them his friends at once; and avowed his intention of taking Carlos immediately upon a voyage.

"'We are sorry to part with his valuable assistance, Captain Kinnard,' they replied, 'but we believe you are right; and, although we trust him, still there must always be a painful feeling, after all, both to him and ourselves'.

"It was agreed by all that this was the best course; but when it was imparted to Carlos, he positively refused to go. No one knew why until we accidentally found that he was about to marry a pretty orphan girl, who, doubtless, was very glad to be relieved of the burden of her maintenance.

"Harry taxed him with it, and he owned to having such an intention.

"'And how will you support her, Carlos?' asked Harry.

"'How, rather, will she be supported if I desert her now?'

"And Harry, good, kind and benevolent as he was, pitied the poor girl so much, after hearing her story, that he actually consented to the marriage, and to bringing her home to stay with us, if Carlos would only go to sea when the ship was ready.

"She was a tender little thing—that poor child who had anchored all her hopes and affections upon my brother Carlos; meek, pretty and affectionate, she was beloved and cherished in our home as fondly as if there was no folly in two such mere children being married; for Carlos was barely twenty, and Jane could not have seen seventeen.

"She was so much afraid of being a burden—so full of earnestness to help us all—so kind and attentive to poor Francis—so tenderly respectful to my mother, that somehow she was received rather as a blessing, than a trouble; and I fancy that both my mother and Harry hoped that this marriage would be a guarantee for the future good conduct of her boy-husband.

"Jane knew all that had been said, but she did not seem to feel that there was anything so terrible in what Carlos had done; and, in fact, we were none of us very anxious to enlighten her. I say *us*, for Francis and myself had innumerable talks about it, confidentially, and knew the whole extent of the frightful affair: but we did not speak of it to the elders of the family.

"Well, the ship sailed at last; and I thought my mother's heart seemed lighter for Carlos being safe with Harry. And it was something, too, to have the care of such a child as Jane—to try to bring her into a state of womanly self-reliance, and to infuse into her a little energy. It was in vain. The poor child had no mental strength to sustain her, and she did not feel the necessity of trying to attain it, and my mother gave it up.

"To the twins my dear mother looked as to the props and support of her old age. They were dear, affectionate boys—very scholarly, and highly intellectual. I told you that they returned every Saturday morning, and staid over the Sabbath. It was so pleasant to see them come home. They had such a world of intelligence to give, and they encouraged poor Francis so much, by saying that next year he could go with them, and how much care they would take of their lame brother. Dear boys! I see them now—each holding one of his hands, and smiling into his face.

"Well, one Saturday they did not come. There was an exhibition, or examination, something of that sort, and they stayed until evening. A dreadful rain storm had arisen, but the stage brought them within a mile, and the brave little fellows, with their small carpet-bags, prepared to trudge home through the wet. Alas! it was dark when they came to the little bridge, and probably the blinding rain prevented them from seeing their way. Hand-in-hand—for so they had been seen to pass all the houses on the road, and many a mother had looked out to admire and bless the handsome boys—hand in hand, they walked into the dark stream, from whence the bridge had just been carried away. A man, who was fighting his way against the wind and stormy rain, heard the words, half-stifled by the swollen waters, as they rose to the foamy surface—'Hold fast by me, Oscar!" and another voice crying—'Herman! Herman! where are you?' and then all was darkness and silence.

"I see by your looks what you would ask, dear Sybil. Yes, they were recovered and brought home. Side by side they lay in the same coffin, just as in infancy they lay in the same cradle; with their hands clasped in each other's, and a smile as heavenly sweet as ever shone on the faces of angels.

"Do you know, Sybil, that of all the sorrows of our family, the death of these boys always seemed to me the least? It seemed so sweet—it must have been so sweet—to die together! And then, I could never make it out to be a sad thing that they were taken away from the evil which so surely overshadows our house.

"It was a great blow to Francis. To think, as he said, of his healthy, beautiful brothers, taken at once from the full enjoyment of life; and of him, a poor, crippled child, of whom every one might well be weary, left to live on! I hushed his sobs, and told him how dear he was to us all, and how impossible it would be to mourn either of them any more deeply than we should his own dear self, were he to be taken away.

"I state these things briefly, because I would fain pass over my mother's grief. Margaret would exclaim, "Oh, if Harry were but here to comfort mother!"

"He did not come, Sybil. We knew nothing of Harry, of Carlos, of the ship. We shall never know, in all probability, until the sea gives up its dead!

"My mother lingered on through these trials, striving to be calm, and bearing them as only a Christian can bear, but with a look that ever turned towards Heaven. You know the rest. You know that Margaret and Jane and poor Francis and myself live together; but the others are not, for God took them."

"Oh, forgive me, dear, dear Lina, that I should put my light afflictions beside yours. I did not know, I never heard of all this before. Besides you were all so calm and cheerful, that I have often thought that even with the crippled state of Francis, it would be natural that you should grieve more than you did outwardly."

"I was not thinking of myself, Sybil, when I chid your sorrow. It was of my mother that I thought; that patient, sorrowing woman, who bore all with a martyr's calmness. *She* knows the fate of her sons."

I looked on Lina as she uttered these words as reverently as I would upon a spirit returned to earth and telling me of the deserted. She had been so familiar with the image of death, that she seemed to me a link between the two worlds. I parted from her with a tenderness which I had never felt for her before. If I wept now, it was not for the sorrow of my own heart, although it had been sorely wounded, and that too, by a friend—but for hers. I was hushed into awe before her, and yet, she had not told me all. I afterwards learned, casually, that she had anchored her affections upon one who was unworthy the gift, and that the wound was yet unhealed.

Many days found me pondering over Lina's story. I had not seen her, I think, for about a week, when, one morning, I was tempted to go over and sit with her a few hours.

On my way, I passed two gentlemen, whom I did not recollect ever having seen before. The eldest of the two crossed over, and said, politely:

"I beg pardon, madam, but if you could tell me anything of Captain Kinnard's family, I would be glad."

I briefly recounted their present circumstances, and offered to show them the way, as I was going there myself. He thanked me, but I could see that what I had said of the mother's death affected him powerfully.

We walked along together, rather silently, and soon came to the gate. Francis sat in his arm-chair, under a tree in the garden, and the three sisters were working, and listening as he read to them. Their seat was of rustic manufacture, the twisted boughs of young trees, forming a rude couch. They did not see us, and the strangers stood looking at the group until the tears came into their eyes. I was strangely affected by their emotion, and longed for Lina to cast her eyes towards us. It was Jane, however, who first noticed us, and with a cry that thrilled through my heart, she gave a single bound towards the gate. The younger gentleman caught her in his arms, while the other enfolded Margaret and Lina in a long embrace.

Harry and Carlos! Had the sea given up its dead, as Lina had said? No; but the living, breathing forms stood there, at the old, familiar gate: and I, to whom she had said it, was standing beside them, afraid to speak, lest the vision should be dissolved.

Lina had felt the Cloud; she now saw the Rainbow.

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I can see this whole scene, as it was before me on that day, freshly painted by the fond artist, MEMORY!

And oh, Harry, *my* Harry, now, truest of all, can I see thy dear face, all wet with tears, which now I behold wreathed in smiles.

I look back, and see a dreary pathway, over which I behold a weary figure toiling on. There is a dim shore where all is chill, and misty, and where the great raindrops are falling into the sea. Above and around hang dark clouds, which obscure the light of day. Across the white beach comes another figure. He holds out his hands to the weary one, and as she clasps them the clouds disappear, and the sunlight shines forth, and in the sky hangs a glorious rainbow. And, as if to realize this vision of the past, I hear the voices of Harry and of my sisters Margaret and Lina calling to me eagerly from the garden, to come out and behold the bow of promise. And, lo! there it still hangs, brightly and gloriously in the heavens!

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Miseries.

Hearing the bells ring for the marriage of your rival.

Toasting cheese, and when it is more than half done, letting it fall into the ashes.

Drying a long letter, by holding it negligently behind your back to the fire, as you converse with a friend; turning round and beholding it all in flames.

Forced by politeness to leave a comfortable party, for the purpose of accompanying a cross old maid to her lodgings, two miles distant.

Making several memorandum knots in your handkerchief, and forgetting the important cause of every one of them.

Dreaming that you have suddenly acquired a large fortune, stretching out your hand to grasp the welcome booty, awakening, and finding nothing in your fist but the bed-post.

Going with a party of pleasure on the water; while in the act of handing a lady into the boat, your foot slips, and you tumble in up to your neck, dragging the affrighted fair one after you.

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A Father's Advice.

Many years ago, I remember of a young man leaving his paternal roof to look out for himself. On the eve of quitting his native mill-village, his father placed a roll of bank bills in his hand, with this advice: "Josiah, you are now about to go out into the wide world, where it's a good deal wider than 'tis here, and no fence round it, neither. Take them bills; and, mind ye, keep yer finger onto 'em tight, for the wind's mighty apt to blow 'em where you'll never see 'em agin. You hain't got a hard-finish edication, but I tell ye, Josiah, common school larnin' is jist as good as the hard-finish, if, you only know how to handle it. Don't swear—don't throw the dips—don't play keards—don't hang about taverns—but yer may chew terbacker some, 'cause yer dad does. Don't cheat anybody what can't afford to stand it; them as can, you may put the hard-finish onto as thick as yer like. Keep a stiff upper lip, Josiah, and don't let nobody impose on ye. If they do, just you bring out them hard-finish licks what yer old dad has guv yer for a 'heritance!"

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At an Indiana wedding lately the choir sang, "Come ye disconsolate." The officiating clergyman, feeling awkward about it, attempted to mend matters by giving out a hymn, but unluckily struck into the one beginning, "Mistaken souls, that dream of bliss."

POETRY.

A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS.

By Clement C. Moore.

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And Mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap;
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wandering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;
"Now, *Dasher!* now, *Dancer!* now *Prancer!* and *Vixen!*
On, *Comet!* on, *Cupid!* on, *Donder!* and *Blitzen!*
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard, on the roof,
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof—
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had hung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.
His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

CAUGHT IN A SHOWER.

By C. Comstock.

HARVEY Bruce stood at the corner of the street, down which he had walked in an angry mood, and waited for the omnibus; while he waited he twirled his cane, twisted his moustache, and—yes, it must be confessed—he bit his nails, but then he was in a very bad temper.

It was a lovely spring morning, the air was fresh and balmy, and even in the town there was a fragrance stirring like the breath of flowers.

When Harvey glanced up an instant to pay his fare after entering the omnibus he found himself seated directly in front of a pretty girl. She looked in another direction immediately—one of them had just proved the bane of his existence.

He was a splendid youth, who had been brought up in idleness, to consider himself the prospective heir of a rich old uncle but within the week all his prospects in life were changed—his uncle had declared him a good-for-nothing fellow, and threatened to disinherit him in favor of an old friend, who had just returned from boarding-school—a pretty girl she was—so Harvey was told—and, naturally enough, he hated pretty girls, and expressed the cynical belief that she would doubtless try her charms on her rich old guardian, and marry him, and so enjoy his wealth without waiting for his death. But however much a young fellow may hate pretty girls in the abstract, or even in a particular instance, it is more or less difficult to avoid looking at one when she is seated opposite, and is so pretty that not only she, but everything she wears, and the very air about her, seems lovely—as if by some magnetism her surroundings partook of her beauty. Harvey, with an impatient sigh, resigned himself to fate, and found himself gazing and taking a mental inventory of the young lady's charms.

She looked the embodiment of the bright spring morning—so young and fresh and sweet. She was probably twenty, but looked younger; she was tall, as he could easily judge, although she was seated; quite slender, but not thin, with a charming willowy grace of figure that when she occasionally moved her pretty head or bent it forward it gave her the look of a flower bending on its stem.

Her features in detail, Harvey didn't notice, except her eyes, which were large, gray, fringed by dark lashes, and surrounded by lovely brows, arched and delicately outlined. Her rich, brown hair was tied back with a ribbon, forming a clustering knot of curls, half hiding a slender white neck. A straw hat of the fashion called gipsy, and trimmed with a wreath of wild flowers, was tied down over her curling hair so as to shade her face, and lend the eyes looking from it an arch, roguish expression.

She was dressed very simply, entirely in white, her costume being a suit of what ladies call pique; but Harvey neither knew or cared what it was—the general effect was all he perceived, and he was forced to acknowledge to himself that he had never seen a lovlier girl. He made the acknowledgment under protest, however, declaring to himself that he hated pretty girls, and emphasizing the declaration with a scowl at his fair vis-a-vis, while he thought, "No doubt Rose Ellis, his uncle's ward, was just such a girl," although that could scarcely be possible, for he had stigmatized that unhappy young female as a designing minx, capable of everything underhanded and vile.

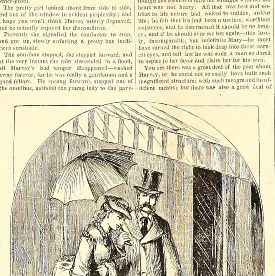
He turned his scowling countenance resolutely away, determined to waste no more time in the useless employment of watching a thing so utterly useless and treacherous as all pretty girls of necessity must be. Harvey looked out of the window, and turned his attention to the state of the weather, which was suddenly giving signs of the proverbial fickleness of its disposition. The sky was already overcast, and a few drops of rain were slowly plashing down on the pavement.

He gave a hurried glance at the pretty girl, and thought with malicious satisfaction that she would get wet through—all her pretty dress and hat, and fair spring freshness, and then where would be her beauty? How infinitely preferable if she could change costumes with the vinegar-faced lady at her side, who was draped from head to foot in water-proof.

The pretty girl looked about from side to side, and out of the window in evident perplexity; and I hope you won't think Harvey utterly depraved, but he actually enjoyed her discomfiture.

Presently she signalled the conductor to stop, and got up, slowly unfurling a pretty but insufficient sunshade.

The omnibus stopped, she stepped forward, and at the very instant the rain descended in a flood, all Harvey's bad temper disappeared—washed away forever, for he was really a gentleman and a good fellow. He sprang forward, stepped out of the omnibus, assisted the young lady to the pavement, carefully protecting her pretty hat with the little sunshade, and, as fortune favored him, he spied an awning thrown out by a friendly shopkeeper, beneath which he hurried his companion, and which afforded them sufficient shelter until the shower was over.



SEE ENGRAVING.

Perhaps it was the reaction from his previous bad temper—for there are more ways than one of catching a heart in the rebound—or perhaps it was the sweet appealing look of his companion's face when she looked up at him, but whatever it might be, Harvey Bruce proceeded then and there to fall in love, utterly, hopelessly, in that headlong manner peculiar to the youth who has never before slipped on that quicksand.

The shower continued about fifteen minutes, and during that time Harvey had considerably advanced his acquaintance with the young lady, who was his enforced companion during its duration. He had a good deal of tact—for a man—and nothing he said or did was calculated to shock her sense of delicacy, or make her feel in the least that they were too entirely strangers for any conversation above commonplaces, to pass between them; but just at the last, when the rain was quite over, and a bright sunbine was already drying up the pavement, Harvey said:

"I know you will not understand what I am going to say; but I feel that I must thank you for doing me a great service."

She looked up at him with her appealing eyes, that seemed to question him without the need of words.

"Yes," he went on, "when I first saw you this morning, I was in so bad a temper that the very sight of you was hateful to me—"

"Of me?" she interrupted, in surprise; "why, I never saw you before."

"Nor I you. But I would have felt just the same if you had been an angel, as indeed you look. It was because you were so sweet and lovely looking that I hated you—no, pray pardon me and let me make my confession complete. It will do me good. I am, in truth, a good-for-nothing dog, having never been taught to be anything else, and because a rich old uncle has threatened to disinherit me in favor of a certain young girl, a ward of his, unless I make a better use of my life, I was mean enough to—well, to hate the sight of you and every pretty girl in creation. I know you hate me—I can see it in your face."

His listener had flushed a lovely pink all over her face to the very roots of her hair. She gave a little constrained laugh.

Harvey thought miserably: "She thinks me a mercenary scamp, and detests me accordingly."

He hastened to add:

"Pray do not think worse of me than I deserve. It wasn't entirely the money I cared for, but it seemed a little unjust to expect great things of me when I had never been taught to do anything."

"It was unjust, and I'm not thinking badly of you at all. I think it was quite natural you should feel as you did—for a little while."

"Only a little while. Yes, I vow to you it was only a little while; and now I am cured forever. I know I shall never feel so again. You will say good-bye to me. I know I am acting in a very unconventional manner; but perhaps I shall never see you again, and I can never forget that the gentle spirit shining out of your sweet eyes has exorcised a demon in my heart. Give me leave to think of you—for indeed I must."

"Then it is useless to forbid you," she answered, with a shy smile, and the roguish look stealing into her eyes.

She put out her slender, ungloved hand, and Harvey clasped it reverently—almost adoringly.

"May I not know your name?" he asked.

"My name is Mary—if you ever think of me, think of me by that name, and as one who will feel proud to know that you have fulfilled the highest expectations of your best friends."

She drew her hand quickly from his, turned and walked rapidly away.

Harvey stood and watched her out of sight, and though she seemed to take the sunlight with her his heart was not heavy. All that was best and noblest in his nature had waked to sudden, ardent life; he felt that his had been a useless, worthless existence, and he determined it should be no longer; and if he should ever see her again—this lovely, incomparable, but indefinite Mary—he must have earned the right to look deep into those earnest eyes, and tell her he was such a man as dared to aspire to her favor and claim her for his own.

You see there was a great deal of the poet about Harvey, or he could not so easily have built such magnificent structures with such meagre and insufficient means; but there was also a good deal of solid worth, and when that exists, whatever be the motive power that sets the machinery going, it is apt to produce good results. Harvey read, studied, wrote—he cultivated every power of his brain; he stored his mind with knowledge; he began to be talked about as a rising littérateur of the day; several of his [illegible] were copied into influential journals with words of praise most grateful to the young poet's heart.

Like a greater brother in letters, the name of Mary was a magic sound to him; he worshipped her in private and in public, his muse loved to sing her charms, and her fair young face floated forever before his mind's eye.

Although now the thought of her was never absent from his mind, and he longed exceedingly to see her again, it did not at first render Harvey unhappy that he had never again met Mary; he revelled in his love for her, but his passion at length became a devouring flame, and he grew to pine for her as the one thing which could render his life complete.

He went everywhere in the hope of meeting her, but was constantly disappointed; he entered the lists of the lecture field, which had always presented attractions to him, and he carried off honors both lasting and valuable—but never, though he seemed to see every female face in his audience, did he behold Mary. He began to think she was but a vision, who had dawned upon him to rescue his spirit from bitterness and resentment, and having fulfilled her mission had vanished to more etherial abodes than those of earth, and where she seemed to belong.

Harvey had during this time received many complimentary messages from his uncle; but he had replied to none, although he bore no ill feeling toward his relative, but on the contrary thanked him as having been the indirect means of helping him to a useful and independent life.

On his return from his lecture room he made up his mind to visit Mr. Templemore; and, having invited himself to dinner one day, he shook hands with his uncle for the first time in three years. The old gentleman had prepared a sumptuous dinder, but no guests were invited.

"I want to have you all to myself this first time, my boy. After this we can make a distinguished guest of you; but this time I determined we should be alone—except my ward, and I wouldn't have had her only she's in the house, and I couldn't get rid of her. Ah! here she is—Miss Rose Ellis, this is my nephew, Mr. Harvey Bruce."

Harvey heard the once hated name with indifference, and rose to meet its owner: he bowed formally, and then raised his eyes to her face. The same—the very same. It seemed as if all the years since then had been a dream, and he now opened his eyes to look on reality.

She was dressed in white, a knot of violets breathed their fragrance from the lace scarf that encircled her throat, and the heavy mass of curling hair was tied back with a ribbon in the same girlish fashion that he always saw it, sleeping or waking.

Harvey was very deeply moved—too deep for words. He stepped forward and clasped her hand, close and long.

"Why you two seem to know each other. Have you met before?" Mr. Templemore asked.

"Just once, dear," Miss Ellis said, smiling at her guardian, then withdrawing her hand very gently, even tenderly.

She sat down to dinner, opposite Harvey, who dined for the most part by long and rapturous glances at her lovely face.

Mr. Templemore fell asleep after dinner, and his ward threw her lace handkerchief over his face.

Then Harvey drew her away into a secluded corner of the room.

"But you told me your name was Mary," he said.

"So it is—Rose Mary Ellis."

"Rosemary—that's for 'remembrance.' Ah! my darling! not even your name is needed as a remembrance of you to me. Oh, Mary, how I have loved you all these three long years!"

The reader knows how Harvey had fallen in love at once, and as Mary had been falling in love ever since she had time to do it thoroughly.

Before Mr. Templemore woke they had compared notes, and if they were caught in a shower again, it was a shower of kisses.

THE HOME CIRCLE
FOR THE NEW YEAR
1878.

This number completes the ninth volume and ninth year of the HOME CIRCLE, and with our next paper we shall greatly surprise our readers by commencing the tenth volume and tenth year with new and clear type; in short, everything about it will be new from top to toe. A host of

NEW CONTRIBUTORS

have been engaged, and the most liberal arrangements have been completed, such as will enable us to produce by far the finest

Family Paper

yet issued. Articles from the pens of the following able writers will continually appear in its columns, many of whom have been engaged exclusively for this journal:

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Several new features will be introduced in the HOME CIRCLE for the coming year.

"FLORA'S OFFERING."

At last we have the pleasure of announcing to our friends that our splendid new chromo, "Flora's Offering," is ready, and that we are more than satisfied with the result of our venture. It is the most beautiful and perfect picture of the kind ever turned out in this or any other country, both in its artistic effect and its entire faithfulness to nature; and we challenge any one to disprove the assertion. We have been to great expense in order to produce this picture in its present state of perfection, that we might offer our readers something exceptionally good about Christmas time; for, in our judgment, nothing would make a handsomer or more appropriate holiday present, than a beautiful picture to adorn the parlor wall. In fact, "Flora's Offering" was prepared especially to fill a vacancy in the vocabulary of holiday presents, and that it will fulfill its mission most admirably, we have not the shadow of a doubt.

It is an oil chromo, in size 16x20, and represents a choice collection of flowers and fruit, in stands and vases. There are Lilies and Roses in abundance, Japonicas, China Pinks, Forget-me-nots, Marigolds, and a great variety of others, and they look so natural and inviting that you fancy you can almost detect a subtle perfume arising from them. On an elegant *epergne* in the centre of the picture are a few ripe strawberries, peaches, cherries and plums, tempting enough to make your mouth water, while on each side of the largest bouquet may be seen a gaudy-winged butterfly, and a long-billed humming-bird, which you expect to see fly away every moment. To heighten the effect, the whole is painted on a black background, which brings the brighter colors into exquisite relief, and distinctly describes every outline.

But it is impossible for any description to convey more than a faint idea of the merits of this picture. The critics have already pronounced it a marvellous work of art, and as such we do not hesitate to recommend it. That all may obtain a copy of this really fine production, we have placed the price within the reach of all. It will be sent to any address, post-paid, on the receipt of *fifty cents.*

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Men, women and children make more money selling our American and European chromos than at any other business. They are just the thing for he times, as they are bright, cheerful and of low cost. We have lady agents clearing from $4 to $5 a day. Men are even doing better.

There could not be a better time to commence than the present, as several millions of chromos can be sold during the season. Bright and cheerful pictures are as saleable as food and clothing, and our agents are deriving great profits from the fact that people will buy good pictures when they are offered at low prices. See list of chromos in another column.

Agents selling our chromos can also take subscriptions at the same time for GLEASON'S PICTORIAL, the HOME CIRCLE, and MONTHLY COMPANION, None offer such liberal commissions to agents as we do. Our chromos have given greater satisfaction than any that have been offered elsewhere.

For full particulars and confidential circular enclose a stamp for return postage. Address

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While the Bell Rings.

A young lady who lives near a railroad crossing, appears to have no occupation except perpetually poking her head out of the window. A wag, the other morning, hailed her from the street.

"Hallo, Miss?"

"What do you want?" said she, after the first flush of indignation at being thus accosted.

"The bell hasn't rung yet," was the answer.

"What do you mean?" asked Miss.

"Why, that sign says you're to 'look out' when the bell rings; but you are looking out all the time."

The young lady's head disappeared with a jerk, and the window went down with a slam.

◆

Don't hang a dismal picture on the wall, and do not daub with sables and gloom in your conversation. Don't be a cynic and disconsolate preacher. Don't bewail and bemoan. Omit the negative propositions. Nerve us with incessant affirmatives. Don't waste yourself in rejection, nor bark against the bad, but chant the beauty of the good. When that is spoken which has a right to be spoken, the chatter and the criticism will stop. Set down nothing that will not help somebody.—*Emerson.*

THE PATENT TIDY FASTENER, made of Plush, all colors. Send 25 cts. for half dozen samples, also ladies indispensables. E. A. HUTCHINSON & CO., mfs., 116 Nassau St., N. Y. Agents wanted.
51—2

WIT AND HUMOR.

What poet do miners value most?—Cole-ridge.

A Des Moines milkman drives cream horses. It's all on the horses.

The young lady who caught a gentleman's eye is requested to return it. What an eye dear!

Among the advertisements in a London paper we are informed that two "sisters want washing."

Advice to an editor is like wit to a millionaire or modesty to a ballet-dancer—a little goes a great way.

A wise man may be pinched by poverty; but only a fool will let himself be pinched by tight shoes.

An architect proposes to build a Bachelors' Hall, which will differ with most houses in having no Eves.

It is right for young people to use a license to get married, but they shouldn't use too much license afterwards.

An Illinois girl couldn't secure a certificate as a school-teacher because she couldn't tell the committee why the hind-wheels of a carriage were the largest.

District visitor (blandly): "Well, dame, and how do you find things now?" Crusty old cottager: "How do I find things? Why, by looking arter 'em, to be sure."

"It's all very well," said Mr. Dobbs' helpmate, "for the moral papers to keep saying—don't get in a passion; but for my part, when that nasty creature Mr. D., goes to bed with his muddy boots on, I kind of biles over."

The speaker at an anniversary meeting mournfully said, "One by one our friends are passing from us into the land of shadows." "Well, exclaimed an old lady, "you would not have 'em go two by two, or all in a huddle, would you?"

Somebody said to Robert Hall, "How many discourses do you think, Mr. Hall, may a minister get up each week?" Answered Hall: "If he is a deep thinker and a great condenser, he may get up one; if he is an ordinary man, two; but if he is an ass, sir, he will produce half a dozen."

A gentleman known for his tardiness, was invited to join a party at Nahant. Contrary to all expectation he was the first on the ground; and his friend in surprise at his punctuality, burst out in the following lucid apostrophe: "So you're come *first at last;* you used to be *behind before;* I suspect you get up early *of late!*"

A couple having been secretly married, the husband expressed anxiety as to their ability to keep the secret. "Oh," said the wife, "there'll be no trouble about that. All you have to do will be to go on behaving towards me just as you've been doing, and nobody will ever suspect you are my husband."

One sunny day during the "last summer," a seedy vagrant jumped off Milwaukee bridge into the river, but was speedily hauled out, and left to dry on the stone steps. After awhile he addressed the policeman who was watching him, and disgustedly said, "This ain't no sort of a town. Why, I've jumped into the *canal,* in a *small village,* and been asked to drink by a dozen men, in five minutes after they hauled me out."

"Thomas, my son," said a father to a little lad in our hearing last week, "won't you show the gentleman your last composition?" "I don't want to," said he. "I wish you would," responded the father. "I won't!" was the reply; "I'll be hanged if I do!" A sickly, half-approving smile passed over the face of the father as he said, in explanation of his son's *brusquerie,* "Tom don't lack manners generally; but the fact is, he's got such a cold that he's almost a fool!" Kind parent! Happy boy!

He was a gentleman from the country, and had ensconced his "girl" and himself in the corner of a tram-car. As the vehicle sped on his arm began to steal round his companion's waist, and his head inclined lovingly towards her, unconscious of observation by a few remaining passengers. Just as the car approached a street, the conductor thrust his head inside the car, and yelled "Saw-yer!" in close proximity to Hayseed's head. The latter, hastily drawing himself "into form," indignantly remarked, "You needn't er howled it through the car, if you did. We're engaged." The rest of the freight set their faces towards the driver, and grinned.

BACK NUMBERS.—We can supply any, or all of the back numbers of the HOME CIRCLE for the present year, at 6 cents a number.

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